

## **Chapter 9 Transpersonal Psychology**

### **“I am the Qur’an and the Seven oft-repeated”**

***The Meccan Revelations – Vol. II (Ibn ‘Arabi, 2004, p. 19)***

#### **The Garden of Paradise, Fed by the River of Wine – *Ma’rifa***

Wilber’s model of Integral Psychology identifies the Upper-Left quadrant as the one which “represents the *interior of the individual*, the subjective aspect of consciousness, or individual awareness” (2000, p. 62). This is the quadrant that Wilber labels as the intentional. For purposes of this dissertation, the Upper-Left quadrant represents the Garden of Paradise fed by the river of wine, because traditionally a cup of wine at the tavern has been the mythopoetic symbol for the transpersonal or mystical dimension of Islam. Wine represents the intoxication of Divine love, but it also symbolizes altered states of consciousness. This dissertation departs from Wilber’s model in the scope of the meaning of transpersonal as it is understood in Islam. Hence this quadrant represents the multidimensionality of existence and it is not limited to the terrestrial realm. In fact, the mystical dimension of Islam does not limit itself purely to the interior of the individual within the context of the entire spectrum of human consciousness. It includes the invisible world of angels and *jinns*, which not only cohabit this terrestrial existence, but it also extends to imaginal realms which can be attained or experienced by the individual with the assistance of angels and other manifestations of Divine Grace.

Using the Sufi system of *nafs*, it made sense to limit the lower *nafs* to the Garden of Paradise fed by the river of water, because many, if not most, of the lower *nafs* have either organic etiologies or they have been constellated as the primary and secondary narcissism of sub-personalities or complexes emerging from an inconstant or unreliable holding environment in the

parenting phase of the self. As the Upper-Right quadrant focuses on the behavioral dimension of human nature, we formulated a self psychology of Islam based on disruptions to and distractions from the essential primordial self, the *fitra*. Using the system of *nafs*, it made sense to limit the tyrannical *nafs* and the regretful or remorseful *nafs* to the Garden of Paradise, fed by the river of water. The regretful *nafs* point to the emergence of conscience, and the beginning of introspection on our subjective experiences. It may happen that the regretful *nafs* can break through to consciousness in the form of a dream, from the deep unconscious, as it did for a renowned Shi'a mystic and poet, Nasir Khusraw (1003 - 1060 CE).

In Alice Hunsberger's biography, *Nasir Khusraw: The Ruby of Badakshan: A Portrait of the Persian Poet, Traveller and Philosopher*, she cites the contents of the dream which he diarized at the age of 41 and later included in his autobiography. It is, appropriate to the theme of this chapter, a dream about his penchant for drinking wine:

One night in a dream I saw someone saying to me, "How long will you continue to drink of this wine, which destroys man's intellect? If you were to stay sober, it would be better for you."

In reply I said, "The wise have not been able to come up with anything other than this to lessen the sorrow of this world."

"To be without one's sense is no repose," he answered me. "He cannot be called wise who leads men to senselessness. Rather, one should seek out that which increases reason and wisdom."

"Where can I find such a thing?" I asked

"Seek and ye shall find," he said, and then he pointed toward the *qibla* and said nothing more. When I awoke, I remembered everything, which had truly made a great impression on me. "You have waked from last night's sleep," I said to myself. "When are you going to wake from that of forty years?" And I reflected that until I changed all my ways I would never find happiness. (2000, pp. 52-53)

This dream, potentially inspired by his regretful *nafs*, was the call to Khusraw to abandon wine as a medium for altered states of consciousness to self-medicate his state of sorrow and despondency, and instead to seek the real wine of spirituality by going on a religious pilgrimage. Although he did set out for Mecca, he tarried in Cairo for 6 years and trained in the religious sciences under the Fatimid intellectuals at al-Azhar, where he learned the distinction between exoteric religion and the esoteric spirituality of Shi'a Islam. Khusraw learned, for example, that one of the key principles articulated earlier in Chapter 6, *taqlid*, which was described as emulation, had another meaning, as Hunsberger explains: "Therefore, for Nasir Khusraw the term *taqlid* takes on a richer meaning than mere blind imitation: it means to carry out the visible religious practice as a first step toward understanding *ta'wil*, the esoteric understanding of religious rituals" (2000, p. 130). He also learns that for a more profound understanding of *tawhid*, the Oneness of God, the verses which refer to his anger and vengeance in the Qur'an cannot reflect human behavior since in Q 42:11, it is made clear that "Nothing resembles Him." This Garden of Paradise then represents the transpersonal and esoteric dimension of Islam, a lush garden fed by the river of wine.

### **The Prophet's Night Journey and Ascension: *Al-Isra* and *Al-Mi'raj***

Of all the transpersonal experiences reported to have happened during the life of the Prophet, his encounter with the Angel Gabriel and the transmission of the Qur'an and the Transpersonal Will through Muhammad, over a 23-year period is considered the most important. This was the aspect of his mission that had both local and universal relevance for the healing of humanity and the world. It was and still remains the religious foundation for exoteric Islam. But is another event is equally significant for the introspective seeker of Truth, one that has lent as much weight

to the spirituality of the Prophet's mission. Quite often they are thought of as just one event, the Prophet's night journey and his ascension. In reality, however, if traditional accounts are to be believed, these were in fact two different events, which occurred one after the other: the Night Journey, *al-Isra*, in which the Prophet was transported from Mecca, as some narratives propose, by the mythic winged steed *al-Buraq*, accompanied by Gabriel, to Jerusalem (Q 17:1-2), and then the Ascension, *al-Mi'raj*, (Q 53: 1 - 18) which took the Prophet through the seven heavens to the Throne of God or into the Divine Presence. It was from this encounter with the Divine Presence that the Prophet received the command that humans should pray 50 times a day. On his descent, the Prophet is said to have encountered Moses, who, on hearing the number of prayers prescribed, urged Muhammad to return and renegotiate the prayers down to the more realistic 5 prayers a day. The recitation of *al-Fatiha*, from 3 to 17 times per day by 1.65 billion Muslims, invokes these two encounters of Muhammad with the Divine Presence. These two Qur'anic citations, referring to the Night Journey and the Ascension, rendered here by Muhammad Asad in *The Message of the Qur'an*, merit our reflection and contemplation in this Garden of Paradise, fed by the River of Wine, for they provide a taste of the profound spirituality of esoteric Islam. Q 17: 1 "Limitless in His glory is He who transported His servant by night from the inviolable House of Worship [at Mecca] to the Remote House of Worship [at Jerusalem] - the environs of which We had blessed - so that We might show him some of Our symbols; for verily, He alone is all-hearing, all-seeing" (Asad & Moustafa, 2003, p. 465). These sacred houses of worship clearly identify the spiritual vortices of two different locations, both blessed by the Divine Word. This verse was revealed in Mecca when the direction of prayer for Muslims was Jerusalem.

The following verses of Q 53: 1-18, which reveal the ascension of the Prophet, also include a response to his detractors who challenged the authenticity of the Prophet's experience and questioned his sanity:

Consider this unfolding [of God's message], as it comes down from on high!  
This fellow-man of yours has not gone astray, nor is he deluded,  
And neither does he speak out of his own desire:  
That [which he conveys to you] is but [a divine] inspiration with which he is being inspired –  
Something that a very mighty one has imparted to him:  
[an angel] endowed with surpassing power, who in time manifested himself  
in his true shape and nature,  
appearing in the horizon's loftiest part,  
until he was but two bow-lengths away, or even nearer.  
And thus did [God] reveal unto His servant whatever He deemed right to reveal.  
The [servant's] heart did not give the lie to what he saw:  
Will you, then, contend with him as to what he saw?  
And, indeed, he saw him a second time  
By the lote-tree of the farthest limit,  
Near unto the garden of promise,  
With the lote-tree veiled in a veil of nameless splendor . . . .  
[And withal], the eye did not waver, nor yet did it stray:  
Truly did he see some of the most profound of his Sustainer's symbols. (Asad & Moustafa, 2003, pp. 925-926)

The language of the ascension verses clearly evokes the Gardens of Paradise in which the lote-tree symbolizes the limits of the highest levels of consciousness. But it also identifies the faculty of vision in the heart, and not in the eyes. Omid Safi's comment on the verse in Q 53:11 in *Memories of Muhammad* introduces us to this very important concept in esoteric Islam: "Of all the human faculties, it is the heart that is most suitable for beholding the Divine" (2009, p. 183). The final verse reminds us that the nature of the Divine vision experienced by Muhammad was in the language of symbols, attesting to the highest imaginal realms.

We are told in the commentary to *The Miraculous Journey of Mahomet: Mirâj Nâmeh*, a mystical legend researched by Marie-Rose Seguy, that prior to the Night Journey and Ascension,

the Prophet was overcome with worry and perhaps anguish and feelings of abandonment. In this state, the Prophet's heart was prepared by a visitation from Gabriel:

Suddenly the archangel Gabriel entered the sleeping Prophet's room. He set about first to purify his heart, washing his breast with water from the sacred spring of Zamzam to remove all traces of error and doubt, idolatry and paganism. Then, taking up a golden beaker, he poured over him the *hikma*, symbolic of wisdom and faith. Covering his breast again, the angel took the Prophet's hand and helped him onto a mysterious mount, the *Buraq*, a fabulous animal as swift as lightning. (1977, p. 10)

Although it is impossible to verify the historicity of this event as told in this legend, the alchemical process of the purification of the heart of the Prophet by washing with the waters of Zamzam is symbolic of the ritual preparations required to begin a spiritually transcendent journey.

On his return to Mecca from this profoundly illuminating experience, another version of these events has Muhammad proceeding to the home of one of his most trusted Companions, Um Hani. He gave her an account of his experience and she advised him not to divulge it, but this Muhammad refused to do. When he went to the Ka'ba and reported his experience, he was mocked by some of his skeptics when he recounted his overnight visit to Jerusalem, where he claimed he had prayed with the Prophets of yore at the site of the Temple. The caravan journey to Jerusalem normally took several weeks. The Quraysh, the dominant tribe and guardians of the Ka'ba in Mecca, were convinced that they finally had proof that Muhammad was indeed mad or possessed by *jinn*. Some traditional accounts suggest that a few Muslims did actually abandon the Prophet at this time. He patiently responded to his detractors by precisely describing the caravans he had seen on his return, making their way across the desert. Abu Bakr, one of his closest companions, loyally stood by the Prophet's report, which seemed more credible when the

caravans he had spied returned to Mecca, a few weeks later. For his loyalty, Abu Bakr earned the title *as-Siddiq*, or witness to the truth.

There are several differing narratives about this event, which are explored by Frederick S. Colby in *Narrating Muhammad's Night Journey: Tracing the Development of the Ibn 'Abbās Ascension Discourse*. The Prophet's skeptics, in two of these narratives, question Muhammad's familiarity with Jerusalem to ascertain if indeed he had ever been there. The Prophet seemed to have been in anguish at not recalling the details of the city of Jerusalem. But then, according to these narratives, the Prophet has a miraculous vision of the city, as Colby recounts: "In order to support the validity of his case, God reveals Jerusalem to the Prophet so that he could confidently assert, 'Each thing they asked about, I informed them of it'" (2008, p. 61).

Even if an individual is not inclined or pre-disposed to mysticism, these two narratives - the Prophet's encounter and continual engagement with the Angel Gabriel coupled with his journey to Jerusalem and thence into the Divine Presence through the seven heavens - gives pause to all Muslims that life is not limited to the human dimension or just to this terrestrial realm. Muhammad, after all, claimed that he was just a man, although we know that he was bestowed with blessings, favors, and Grace. It was these two events which served as the foundation for the revelation of esoteric Islam, and its mystical dimension.

Various commentaries and sayings emerged about the Prophet's Ascension. One important text is a compilation of sayings by Sulami and translated by Colby in *The Subtleties of the Ascension Early Mystical Sayings on Muḥammad's Heavenly Journey*. One of these sayings links the *mi'raj* to the Q 20:114, which merits its complete inclusion here, rendered by Asad as: "[Know,] then, [that] God is sublimely exalted, the Ultimate Sovereign, the Ultimate Truth: and [knowing this,] do not approach the Qur'an in haste, ere it has been revealed unto thee in full, but

[always] say: ‘O my Sustainer, cause me to grow in knowledge!’” (2003, pp. 538-539). Abu Sa‘id Kharrāz is reported to have said “The Prophet was commanded to invoke through the saying ‘*My Lord, increase me in knowledge.*’ He used to be given knowledge through intermediaries and mediators. When this invocation was made to flow on his tongue, it was answered for him. That did not happen out of a deliberate intention for it on his part, nor from any request, but rather to demonstrate his favor” (Sulami & Colby, 2006, p. 64). The significance of this saying is that the Prophet’s ascension is depicted as a journey granted to him by God specifically to reveal secret knowledge to Muhammad.

Tariq Ramadan’s commentary and insight on the Night Journey of the Prophet in *In The Footsteps of Prophet* is a shared understanding by many Muslims: “Jerusalem thus appears at the heart of the Prophet’s experience and teaching as a dual symbol, of both centrality (with the direction of prayer) and universality (with the prayer of all the prophets) (2007, p. 73). The Messenger’s encounter with many of the Prophets in the narratives of the Night Journey and the Ascension serve to confirm not just the universality of the Divine Word to humankind but also to the unity of the Divine message. Islam has long contended that in fact there is only one divine revelation and that each of the Prophets was entrusted with the same mission. The Qur’an’s mention of all the major prophets is testimony to its ecumenical stance regarding the underlying unity of the spiritual dimension of humankind.

Ramadan’s more profound insight on the Ascension of the Prophet is that all previous revelations had reached the Messenger through his encounters with Gabriel in the course of his earthly existence, but the Divine Will articulated the duty of prayer to the Prophet in the very presence of God. Hence, the spiritual significance and energy in the recitation of *al-Fatiha* connects all Muslims to the moment when the Prophet stood before the Divine Presence:



The *miraj* (the elevation during the Night Journey) is thus more than simply an archetype of the spiritual experience; it is pregnant with the deep significance of prayer, which, through the Eternal Word, enables us to liberate our consciousness from the contingencies of space and time, and fully comprehend the meaning of life and of Life. (2007, p. 74)

In *The Spirituality of Shi'i Islam: Beliefs and Practices*, Sorbonne Professor of Classical Islamic Theology and Qur'anic Studies Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi cites the renowned Shi'a Imam and scholar, Jafar al-Sadiq, himself a descendant of the Prophet, in proposing a different interpretation of the *mi'raj* narrative. He identifies the Shi'i principle of *walaya* or loyalty, fidelity and devotion to 'Ali and his descendants as the rightful successors of the Prophet:

As we know, during the course of his ascension, Muhammad encounters many prophets and angels; according to the different traditions, these holy figures also variously reiterate the sacred nature of 'Ali's *walaya*. As cited above, in the extensive tradition regarding the Prophet's initiation into the *adhan*, ablution and canonical prayer, the angels of each heaven ask Muhammad to convey their greetings to 'Ali, adding that they have pledged allegiance on the occasion of the pre-eternal Pact (*mithaq*) with God, to remain loyal to 'Ali and his cause until the Day of the Resurrection. (Amir-Moezzi, 2011, p. 173)

In the Shi'a tradition, the above reference to the pre-eternal pact with 'Ali invokes the moment when the angels and jinns are asked by God to prostrate to the Eternal Adam. This link between 'Ali and Adam is not an idea that is acceptable to the majority Sunni practitioners of Islam. But it is a foundational concept in establishing a spiritual bond between Shi'a Muslims and their Imams, who take on suprahuman attributes for their followers. It is important to note, then, that for the Shi'a, the *walaya* to the Imam is the most important pillar of Islam. It was never a question about his temporal political succession to the Prophet, but it was always about the very foundation of faith in the Imam as the Eternal Adam. This is a topic beyond the scope of this dissertation, but it is essential to understand the real depth of emotion that this pillar of spirituality engenders for Shi'a Muslims.

### ***Al-Mi'raj: The ladder of consciousness***

As we turn the corner on our regretful *nafs* and begin sincere efforts in our spiritual inquiry and practices such as prayer, meditation, and service to others, we begin to ascend the ladder of consciousness to the level of the inspired *nafs* of surrender and repentance, and what has been identified by Sheikh Sidi Muhammad al-Jamal in *Music of the Soul* as the *nafs al-amina*. Here we make a conscious turn away from our narcissistic wounding, our emotional and spiritual injuries. Our heart-felt repentance attains Divine acceptance as negative patterns of thought and behavior begin to fall away. We no longer lament the early loss of a loving holding environment as we are embraced with Divine love. We begin to trust and align ourselves with Divine Guidance and with the Transpersonal Will. Often this may take another form of emulation or *taqlid*, the direct inspiration and guidance from an external unifying center, such as the Sheikh(a) or the Imam of the Time or a symbol of the Self, such as one of the Prophets. This inspiration may be received in the form of remembrance of a Presence or *himma*, inspired thoughts or *'aql*, epiphanies and dreams or *khayal*, and imaginal encounters with beings of Light or *nur*. As already mentioned, Frager in *Heart, Self and Soul* (1999) considers this stage of the development of the *nafs* as the most dangerous as we can easily fall into self-inflation, especially if we are journeying without a Guide. Is this what happened to al-Hallaj? Will we ever know?

The role of the external unifying center is to mediate this stage of spiritual development which seems to cause so much consternation for mainstream practitioners of Islam, because often this stage of development constellates a profoundly powerful relationship between the Sufi aspirant and the Guide. This is when the cries of idolatry, *shirk*, are often heard loudest, because the seeker becomes intoxicated with love for the Guide, as in the relationship between Rumi and his Guide, Shams i Tabriz. This is the stage known as *fana fi sheikh* or annihilation of our

negative traits and the emergence of our spiritual dimensions in union with our Guide, or external unifying center which then becomes internalized. The *khalifa*, or mastery, positive traits, and stewardship of the Guide, is introjected, and we begin to attain our own *khalifa*. The various forms of expressions of devotion and reverence for the Guide appear intolerable for the uninitiated, and are considered heretical to those who seek Truth directly, without a Guide other than the Qur'an, and faith in an exclusively Transcendent *Imago Dei*.

The next phase in our spiritual evolution is the stage of the serene *nafs* or the *nafs mutma'innah* as referenced in the Qur'an (Q 89:27-30). Frager characterizes this stage as one that includes "trust in God, good actions, spiritual pleasure, worship, gratitude and contentment" (1999, p. 76). This is a stage where the energies of the higher unconscious, as it is understood in Assagioli's model of the self, become more available to the Sufi aspirant and the impulses of the lower unconscious begin to lose their potency and influence.

At the next level of the pleased *nafs*, or the *nafs ar-radhiyya* in *Music of the Soul*, we are more fully surrendered to the Transpersonal Will and begin to experience the Divine Mercy and Compassion in which we are held. We accept with equanimity the trials and tribulations that are the unique characteristics of our journey home to the Divine. Our imaginal field opens wider to the miraculous as we become less attached to the outcome of our efforts and our dis-identification with the persona continues, through our contemplation and remembrance of the Self, resulting in a retrieval of the essential self, the *fitra*. Our spiritual practices become effortless as we ride the wave of divine consciousness, learn to sing the Divine song and hear the faint voice of the Divine until we are graced with the stage of the *nafs* pleasing to God, or in Sidi's model, the *nafs al-mardhiyya*.

This progression of ascending levels of consciousness is beautifully captured in the famous *Sura* (Chapter) on Light, in Q 24:35, rendered in *The Message of the Qur'an* as follows:

God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His Light is, as it were, that of a niche containing a lamp; the lamp is [enclosed] in glass, the glass [shining] like a radiant star: [a lamp] lit from a blessed tree - an olive tree that is neither of the east nor of the west - the oil whereof [is so bright that it] would well-nigh give light [of itself] even though fire had not touched it: light upon light! God guides unto His Light him that wills [to be guided]; and [to this end] God propounds parables unto men, since God [alone] has full knowledge of all things. (Asad & Moustafa, 2003, p 603)

“Light upon Light” in the above verse is the perfect expression of a trajectory of potential spiritual evolution for humanity which is inherent in the transpersonal psychology of Islam.

As has been mentioned earlier, the *nafs* pleasing to God is the stage of complete self-integration and nonduality. The climax of the journey of spiritual transformation is the stage of the Pure *Nafs*, or the *nafs al-kamila*, which only some of the great souls have attained. This is the terminus and the extreme limits of self-transcendence, where no trace of the self is left. This is the state of the annihilation of the self in God, *fana fillah*, which the Sufis have called “to die before dying,” and it is attained by the most profound love and devotion. It is from one of these ascended levels of the *nafs* that Mansur al-Hallaj exclaimed “I am the Truth!”

## **Sufism**

Although at the time of the Prophet, the term *Sufism* was not in use, it is clear that some who surrounded the Prophet sought to understand the *batin*, the inner aspect of the Divine through the inner meaning of the revelation. Ibn Khaldun's *The Muqaddimah* explains that Sufism belonged to the sciences of the religious law that originated in Islam and forged an understanding of the path of truth and right guidance:

The Sufi approach is based upon constant application to divine worship, complete devotion to God, aversion to the false splendor of the world, abstinence from pleasure, property, and

position to which the great mass aspire, and retirement from the world into solitude for divine worship. (Ibn Khaldun, Rosenthal, & Dawood, 1978, p. 358)

In the literature review, we explained that Islam has four different dimensions: the *shari'a* as the religious law, the *tariqa* as the spiritual path, the *haqiqa* as the truth of ontological reality, and finally, the path of gnosis or *ma'rifa*, which is the search for esoteric knowledge through the unitive experience with God. Sufism is hence a search for Transcendence within the essential self. The Unitive experience brings Transcendence and Immanence into unity as an outcome of the alchemical process of transmuting the *nafs* through self-integration and transforming the heart through spiritual discipline. Professor of Islamic Studies Carl Ernst, in *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, explains that this search for knowledge in the traditional sciences was known as *'ilm*, but “when mystical knowledge was emphasized over traditional learning, the preferred term was *ma'rifa* or *'irfan*, meaning a special knowledge or gnosis that transcended ordinary reality” (1997, p. 28). For many of the seekers of the deeper truths of Islam, it was clear from the Prophet's Night Journey and his Ascension that there were multiple levels of reality that were not immediately apparent from a superficial recitation and study of the Qur'an.

Based on this esoteric knowledge of the Prophet's journey and other imaginal realms, many Muslims – the saints and the Sufis of the faith – set out to discover these realms for themselves. From Rab'ia (717 - 801 CE) and al-Hallaj (857 - 922 CE) to Al-Ghazzali (1058 - 1111 CE) and Attar (1146 - 1229 CE), from Ibn 'Arabi (1165 - 1240 CE) and Sa'adi (1184 - 1283 CE) to Rumi (1207 - 1273 CE) and Hafiz (1320 - 1391 CE), and numerous others, all set out to explore these inner worlds and higher states of consciousness, imbued with love for the Divine. Some expressions of this love were sober; others were ecstatic. Based on their own discoveries of altered states of consciousness and a taste of Divine Love, they expressed themselves in poetry

and prose, allowing others to attempt to map out these imaginal realms, each adding a piece of insight to the puzzle of ontological reality.

Rab'ia is renowned for declaring in response to a seeker who claimed not to have sinned for a long time: "Your existence is a sin to which no other sin can be compared." We will meet her again in chapter 10 on the feminine psychology of Islam. Al-Hallaj is infamous for declaring "I am the Truth." Bayazid Al-Bistami (804 - 874 CE) exclaimed in a state of ecstasy, "Glory be to me." Ibn 'Arabi declared "I am the Qur'an and the seven oft repeated [verses]!" They had clearly attained profoundly illuminated states of consciousness, beyond our normal sense perceptions. But did these declarations and sayings represent states of spiritual self-inflation? Or did these words emanate from spiritual beings who had attained high levels of self-transcendence and no longer had any sense of their own persona?

### **The Path of Ibn 'Arabi**

The Sufi mystic who went further than most to map the ladder of consciousness was Ibn 'Arabi, who was known as the *Sheikh al-Akbar* or the greatest Sheikh. Many spiritual teachers have recommended a path to psycho-spiritual development, from the Buddhist tradition to Krishnamurti. But Ibn 'Arabi was not just interested in dismantling the personality for the purpose of experiencing well-being and freedom, but for the very experience of gnosis and extinction of the self in the Beloved.

In *The Meccan Revelations* Ibn 'Arabi recounts his nocturnal journey to the seven heavenly spheres, providing details of his encounters with the spirits of earlier prophets in each heaven. The theme of the Prophet's ascension served as a symbolic framework for a full range of spiritual questions and ontological, cosmological, and theological issues. He is careful to note

that this was not a physical journey: “So I passed through into the first heaven: nothing remained with me of my bodily nature that I [needed to] depend on or to which I [had to] pay attention” (Ibn Arabi, Chodkiewicz, Chittick, & Morris, 2005, p. 217). In the First Heaven he meets Adam who illuminates for him the meaning of various Qur’anic verses. Adam clarifies for Ibn ‘Arabi that the Divine Wrath (Q 1:7) was already a thing of the past:

“If [God’s] Anger were to continue [forever], then the suffering [of the damned] would continue. But it is happiness that continues forever, although the dwellings are different, because God places in each abode [of Paradise and Gehenna] that which comprises the enjoyment of the people of that abode which is why both abodes must necessarily be ‘filled up’. For the [divine] Anger has already come to an end with the ‘Greater Reviewing’: [God] ordered that [His] limits be established; so they were established, and when they were established [His] Anger disappeared. [This is] because the sending down of the [divine] Message (*tanzil al-risala*) actually *is* precisely the establishment [and application] of [God’s] limits for *those with whom He is angry* (Qur’an 1:7), and nothing remains [after that] but [His] Good Will and *Mercy which encompasses everything* (Qur’an 7:156). So when these ‘limits’ [and the punishments flowing from them] have come to an end, then the [divine] authority comes back to the universal Mercy with regard to everything.” (p. 218)

He meets Jesus and Yahya, John the Baptist in the Second Heaven, where he discovers that Jesus’ life-giving powers came from Gabriel and that Yahya moves between several heavenly spheres. He encounters Joseph in the Third Heaven, where he learns the meaning of certain verses on Sura 12, named for Joseph. He learns that each soul must make its own journey and that no one can predict the course of each soul, especially if it is not blessed with the taste (*dhawq*) of direct spiritual experience. In the Fourth Heaven, he meets Idris, who calls him the “Muhammadan inheritor” (*al-warith al-Muhammadi*), from which Ibn ‘Arabi conceived of his unique role as the “Seal of Muhammadan Sainthood.” Idris explains to him the true meaning of *tawhid* (Unity) as understood by the prophets, but Idris takes a Jungian turn and explains that “God is in accordance with the saying of everyone who speaks to [Him]” (Ibn Arabi, Chodkiewicz, Chittick, & Morris, 2005, p. 223). Idris explains that all that the prophets could do

was call the believers to the concept of *tawhid*, but not to the reality of it. In the Fifth Heaven, Ibn ‘Arabi goes to meet Aaron and, to his astonishment, Yahya appears again. He asks Yahya if he had taken another path, to which Yahya replies “Each person has a path, that no one else but he travels” (p. 223). These explanations will necessarily influence the hermeneutic of the verse on the Straight Path.

Aaron helps Ibn ‘Arabi understand the interaction between him and his brother Moses over Aaron’s having allowed the Israelites to worship the Golden Calf. Aaron explains why the Israelites reverted to their former ways from lack of the taste of spiritual experience. In the Sixth Heaven, Ibn ‘Arabi meets Moses and thanks him for renegotiating the number of prayers required of Muslims to which Moses replies that he had the benefit of knowledge attained through direct experience. Moses then responds to Ibn ‘Arabi’s question about Moses’ beatific vision, to which Moses explained how he was veiled from knowledge of the true reality of God until the veil was removed, and reiterates the importance of knowledge: “That is why we [Knowers of God] have said that Knowledge is His very Essence, since if Knowledge were not His very Essence, what was relied on [i.e., our knowledge] would be other than God – for nothing can be relied on but knowledge” (Ibn Arabi, Chodkiewicz, Chittick, & Morris, 2005, p. 226). But later Moses also warns Ibn ‘Arabi not just to rely on the experience of the Prophets:

So do not let yourself be veiled from Him by the likes of us [prophets]! For you will never come to know about Him by means of us anything but what we know about Him through His Self-manifestation. Thus we too only give you [knowledge] about Him to the extent of your predisposition. (2005, pp. 226-227)

Moses further clarifies that even at the level of the spiritual experience and knowledge of the Prophets, each one has a unique direct experience based on his or her own predispositions and spiritual rank.



Ibn ‘Arabi encounters Abraham in the Seventh Heaven. Here he asks Abraham more questions about specific Qur’anic verses that reference him. But it is in this heaven that Ibn ‘Arabi discovers the celestial Ka’ba as the temple of the Heart:

Then I saw the *Inhabited House* (Qur’an 52:4), and suddenly there was my Heart - and there were the angels who “enter It every day”! The Truly Real manifests Himself to the [Heart], which [alone] encompasses Him, in “seventy thousand veils of light and darkness.” Thus He manifests Himself to the Heart of His servant through those (veils) - for “if He were” to manifest Himself without them, “the radiant splendors of His Face would burn up” the creaturely part of that servant. (Ibn Arabi, Chodkiewicz, Chittick, & Morris, 2005, p. 228)

Finally, his ascension takes him to the Lotus Tree of the Limit (Q 53:14), from where he sees the four rivers as “the four kinds of divine knowledge, ‘granted as a gift’ [to man]” (2005, p. 228). Then Ibn ‘Arabi has the experience of being enveloped by the Divine Light and a robe of honor was bestowed on him, at which point he hears the words of verse Q 3:84 which speaks to the unity of the prophets: “Thus He gave me *all* the Signs in this Sign, clarified the matter (i.e., of the eternal Reality of the “*Qur’an*”) for me, and made this Sign for me the key to *all* knowledge. Henceforth I knew that I *am* the totality of those [prophets] who were mentioned to me [in this verse]” (p. 229).

From this ascension experience Ibn ‘Arabi received the good tidings that he had been granted the “Muhammadan station.” He concludes from this that Muhammad’s mission was indeed universal and from whatever spiritual direction we come “you will find only the Light of Muhammad overflowing upon you; no one takes [spiritual knowledge] except from It, and no [divine] messenger has informed [man] except for [what he has taken] from it” (Ibn Arabi, Chodkiewicz, Chittick, & Morris, 2005, p. 229). Again, we see the potential for a plenitude of higher levels of consciousness, which Ibn ‘Arabi asserts is available to all seekers, regardless of the spiritual tradition they may follow. It is not unusual for those who have attained these highest

levels of consciousness to appreciate the veiled Unity in the differences between spiritual traditions, because their religious experience has transcended their religious identity.

### **The Seven Stages of the Path**

In contrast to Fowler's six stages of the development of faith towards a Universalizing faith, Ibn 'Arabi recommends a graduated path of seven stages to self-transcendence, which have been outlined in the literature review. In his book, *The Philosophy of Ibn Arabi*, former Professor of Islamic Studies Dr. Rom Landau (1959) outlines these stages of the mystical path: (1) Passing away from sin, which is to regard one's actions as coming from oneself, rather than from God; (2) passing away from all actions in the realization that God is the agent of all actions; (3) passing away from all attributes of the form in the realization that they all belong to God because for Ibn 'Arabi, God sees Himself in you through your own eye and, therefore, He really sees Himself: this is the meaning of the passing away of attributes; (4) passing away from one's own personality in the realization of the nonexistence of the phenomenal self, and the endurance (*baqa'*) of the eternal substance which is its essence; (5) passing away from the whole world in the realization of ontological reality which underlies the phenomenal world; (6) passing away from all that is other than God, even from the act of passing away (*fana' al-fana'*). The mystic ceases to be conscious of himself as contemplator, God being both the contemplator and the object of the contemplation. This is markedly different from the common Sufi view of the extinction of the conscious self, which Ibn 'Arabi defines as mere sleep; and finally (7) passing away from all Divine attributes. This seventh stage represents the fullest realization of the oneness of all things, and must be the final aim of all mystical endeavors.

Note that Ibn 'Arabi specifically elucidates how in his Stage 4, "passing away from one's

own personality” is an essential process towards attaining that Companionship on High which all the mystics have sought to achieve. It is surely from this vantage, when all his masks have been removed, that he can write these verses about his faith in Tarjuman al-Ashwaq, in *The Mystics of Islam*, translated by Reynold A. Nicholson, and how it becomes transmuted into an I-Thou relationship of love:

My heart has become capable of every form:  
It is a pasture for gazelles and  
A convent for Christian monks,  
and a temple for idols and the pilgrim's Ka'ba,  
and the tables of the Tora and the book of the Koran.  
I follow the religion of Love,  
whichever way his camels take.  
My religion and my faith is the true religion. (1989, p. 105)

There is some question as to whether the mystical stages of faith follow a particular developmental pattern related to ages in the lifespan. Ibn 'Arabi himself was gifted with numinous experiences at an early age (one biographer cites the age of 16 for his first spiritual retreat). Many of these experiences were gifts from the Divine, including remarkable imaginal encounters with Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, and Khidr, but he was clearly on a path of devotion that aspired to self-transcendence. These numinous experiences confirmed for him the transcendent unity of religion, so that all separations became extinct in the Unity of the Divine.

This is what Fowler considers the final stage in faith development, a Universalizing of faith, which is inspired by Richard Niebuhr's descriptions of radical monotheistic faith:

Radical monotheistic faith has powerful ethical correlates. With roots deep in the Jewish tradition, yet in a manner resonant with Eastern ideals of nonattachment, radical monotheism interrupts all attachments to centers of value and power that might be prized for ego or group-ego reasons. The sovereign God of radical monotheistic faith is an enemy to all idolatrous gods. This includes the gods of nation, self, tribe, family, institutions, success, money, sexuality and so on. (1981, p. 205)

The experience of removing the mask of religious identity was and continues to be for many Sufi mystics, in real terms, more a “falling away” of religious identity through their spiritual practices and devotions, an experience, as Rumi describes it, of seeing without distortion, free of prejudice and self-interest, and accepting no bribes. The Garden of Paradise, fed by the River of Wine, becomes the garden of religious experience as one learns to drop the mask of religious identity, which often represents our passions and fixations in the Garden of Paradise, fed by the River of Milk, and the Garden of Paradise, fed by the River of Honey.

In *The Mystics of Islam*, Nicholson cites a treatise on Sufism that differentiates the stages of an ascetic and ethical discipline of Sufism from the states of spiritual feeling or disposition over which the seeker has no control. “They descend from God into his heart, without being able to repel them when they come or to retain them when they go” (1989, p. 29). Citing the unknown author of *Kitab al-Luma*, he ranks these stages in order of progression: (1) repentance, (2) abstinence, (3) renunciation, (4) poverty, (5) patience, (6) trust in God, and (7) satisfaction. These stages are of a clearly rigorous discipline and are differentiated from the following ten states, which include states of consciousness in meditation, feelings of nearness to God, feelings of love and intoxication, fear or awe of God, hope for success, longing for God, feelings of intimacy, spiritual tranquility, contemplation, and certainty of knowledge. These descriptions provide more of a flavor of the experiential states than the stages identified by Ibn ‘Arabi.

As has been noted, Ibn ‘Arabi has written accounts about his own encounters with many of the Abrahamic prophets, including Moses and Jesus as well as Khidr, who was not an “imaginary” or “mythic” figure to the *Sheikh al-Akbar*. He was not just an archetypal figure or image, as James Hillman might speak of it. He was much more like Jung’s Philemon, “a living personality,” as Jung describes his own guru. He was a “real personage” or “embodied spirit” in

the Imaginal Realm, a dimension or plane of existence that has implications not only for our human understanding of the time-space continuum, but also for the authenticity of what may appear to some as the “unseen” or “invisible” forces in the Universe. Perhaps they even make up the essential nature and structure of the Universe. In Stephen Hirtenstein’s biography, *The Unlimited Mercifier: The Spiritual Life and Thought of Ibn ‘Arabi*, the Sheikh’s own description of his meeting with Khidr, as he walked on water towards Ibn al-Arabi, who had just woken from stomach pains on a full moon-lit night on his return voyage by boat from Tunis, is poignant:

He stood on one leg and raised the other, so that I could see his foot was not wet. Then he raised the other leg, and I saw the same. After that he conversed with me in a language which is special to him; he then took his leave and went off in the direction of the lighthouse which stood on top of the hill a good two miles away. It took him just two or three paces to travel the distance. I could hear him on top of the lighthouse, glorifying God. (1999, p. 90)

Evelyn Underhill’s seminal work, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man’s Spiritual Consciousness*, speaks of the mystic’s goal as the escape from the prison of the world of senses to attain knowledge of, or make contact with, a suprasensible Reality: “The mystic life, therefore, involves the emergence from deep levels of man’s transcendental self; its capture of the field of consciousness; and the ‘conversion’ or rearrangement of his feeling, thought, and will - his character - about this new centre of life” (1974, p. 68). This is an excellent description for the interior life of the mystic’s world but it does not fully cover the range, the depth and breadth of experiences, of the imaginal realms, the *‘alam al-mithal* or the *mundus imaginalis* which contain many realities. These are realities which may only be perceptible to the mystic but they are not only limited to the interior world of the mystic. More importantly, visions and external phenomena can quite suddenly break into the consciousness of the unsuspecting

seeker who may enter a period of initiation into mysticism through the experience of the imaginal realms and nonordinary states of consciousness.

### **Nonordinary States of Consciousness**

The experiences of psychoanalyst Robert Johnson as described in his autobiography, *Balancing Heaven and Earth* are instructive. He describes a specific moment when, as an 11-year-old, after surgery on a severed artery, he has what can only be called a near-death experience: “It was pure light, gold, radiant, luminous, ecstatically happy, perfectly beautiful, purely tranquil, joy beyond bound. I wasn’t the least bit interested in anything on the earthly side of the divide; I could only revel at what was before me” (1998, p. 2). As a 16-year-old, after working all night, he has a work-site injury. He drives up into the hills of Portland to get a view of the four snowcapped mountains that surround the city just in time for sunrise: “The sun began to inch its way over the horizon, and unbelievably - the Golden World shone forth again with all its glory. The same world I had known at age eleven, the same golden light, the same condensation of pure beauty - it was all there” (p. 7).

Later in his life, while he is at an ashram in Pondicherry, he remembers the story of an old yogi who had once lived and taught under an old mango tree in Halasingi, a rural village in South India, where he was invited by his friend, Shankar, to visit. In his morning reverie at the ashram, he encounters this old yogi as an “imaginary vision” and has the sense that he is called by the yogi to undergo a number of tests and tortures for 3 days in Halasingi. By his own description, Johnson thinks of this experience as an “active imagination exercise.” When the vision ends, he experiences an altered state of consciousness:

It was such a vivid experience that it left me profoundly shaken, as though I had been through a real event. It is important to understand the level upon which this story

was true; no great yogi ever came to me, but somehow the story spun itself out inside me and left a residue of wisdom. If one is careful enough to keep the levels straight, to remember that such visions are an inner experience, then active imagination applied in this way can be extremely powerful and helpful. (1998, pp. 234-235)

When he recounts this imaginal experience to his friend, Shankar, a few days later, there is no question in Shankar's mind that this was a real event. They began to duel about the reality of this experience. Johnson's reflections on this event are illuminating:

At that moment I began to understand the great depth of India's psyche, an insight that helped me to cope with that wonderful/terrible place. India values the imaginal and gives greater credence to that reality than to what we call the real facts of life. Our sound, scientifically proven realities are nothing but maya, a web of illusion, to a traditional Indian. In my estimation, my active imagination exercise had more to do with me and my inner state than with the mango tree sitting in a field near Halasangi, but for Shankar there was no separation of the two. From that day, I experienced a new way of seeing India, a way of feeling her interior power, and simultaneously I began to realize how great our loss is in the West. We think that the imaginal life is nothing at all, a waste of time, at best, and the ravings of psychotics, at worst. But I began to ponder: Did I dream of a yogi under the mango tree or did he dream of me? (1998, pp. 235-236)

Another example of these multiple realities would be the mystical cities of Jabalqa, Jabarsa, and Hurqalya, which Henri Corbin mentions in his essay titled "*Mundus Imaginalis*" in *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*. Corbin cites the theosophical, illuminationist writings of Sohrawardi (1155 - 1191 CE) in the description of the intermediate world, perceptible only to a noetic faculty, of the imaginal realm, which is "a world where there are cities whose number it is impossible to count, cities among which our Prophet himself named Jabalqa and Jabarsa, do not call it a lie, for pilgrims of the spirit may contemplate that world" (Corbin & Fox, 1999, p. 8).

In *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth: From Mazdean Iran to Shi'ite Iran*, Corbin explains how the active Imagination is the faculty by which one is able to perceive this middle domain or the intermediary world:

Thus is constituted this intermediary world, a world of archetypal celestial Figures which the active Imagination alone is able to apprehend. This Imagination does not *construct* something unreal, but *unveils* the hidden reality; its action is, in short, that

of the *ta'wil*, the spiritual exegesis practiced by all the Spirituals of Islam, whose special quality is that of alchemical meditation: to occultate the apparent, to manifest the hidden. It is in this intermediary world that those known as the '*urafa*', the mystical Gnostics, have meditated tirelessly, *gnosis* here being taken to mean that perception which grasps the object not in its objectivity, but as a sign, an intimation, an announcement that is finally the soul's annunciation to itself. (1989, pp. 11-12)

## Spiritual Guidance

One of the rationales for an aspirant of truth to seek a Sheikh in the Sufi tradition is precisely to find guidance through this uncharted terrain in order to carefully discern these imaginal realities, as William Chittick explains in *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al- 'Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity*:

It is not always easy to tell the difference between an imaginal object and a sensory object. Although some people claim to experience the unveiling of luminous or fiery spirits - that is, angels or jinn - few of them know how they perceive what they perceive, nor do they know for certain the source of what they perceive. The Shaykh tells us that both the eye of imagination and the eye of sense perception function through the sense of sight, and the science of distinguishing between the perceptions of the two eyes is subtle. In fact, he says, this is one of the most difficult sciences to gain, and even many of the Folk of God do not have it. (1994, pp. 84-85)

Ibn 'Arabi's lament was that nothing caused greater obfuscation than when the imagination became confused with sense perception. This is a faculty of differentiation which for him could only be endowed by God, who clarified affairs for the seeker, showing him which eye he was seeing things with. It seems many of Ibn 'Arabi's followers paid little attention to these distinctions. This may also be problematic for depth psychology, since the felt or lived experience of the individual is validated as a psychological truth, but the skill of discerning between these different faculties of perception receives very little attention. In my imaginal dialogue (please see Appendix G), I was having difficulty discerning whether al-Buraq's image was just in the imagination of the mind (*khayal*) or whether I was actually seeing his or her wings in my study. I know that al-Buraq is very alive in the imagination of my heart (*himma*),



especially when I do an enactment of him or her flapping his or her wings in my morning Qigong practices!

Clearly, the relationship between Guide and disciple, Sheikh and *murid*, Guru and devotee is an essential aspect of transpersonal psychology, although there are always exceptions such as the case of Rab'ia, who attained a very high level of consciousness without spiritual direction from an external Unifying Center. We might speculate that she had a well developed internal Unifying Center.

But for the vast majority of us, including some of the most spiritually evolved teachers, a guide is still essential to one's success on a spiritual path because of their experience and knowledge on the well-trodden path. Yogananda (1893 - 1952 CE) who served as a spiritual teacher to many American and Indian devotees also maintained contact with his own guide, Sri Yukteswar (1855 - 1936 CE), even after his passing in 1936. Sri Yukteswar came to Yogananda in a vision, and explained his new role in the astral realms in Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi*, suggesting also that the need for guidance continues beyond this life:

“As prophets are sent on earth to help men work out their physical karma, so I have been directed by God to serve on an astral planet as a savior,” Sri Yukteswar explained. “It is called Hiranyaloka or ‘Illumined Astral Planet.’ There I am aiding advance beings to rid themselves of astral karma and thus attain liberation from astral births. The dwellers of Hiranyaloka are highly developed spiritually; all of them had acquired, in their last earth-incarnation, the meditation-given power of consciously leaving their physical bodies at death.” (2011, p. 353)

The central role of a spiritual guide, within the context of a Transpersonal Psychology of Islam, is to guide the aspirant towards his or her next steps on the path of self-realization, and self-transcendence. This guidance may take the form of a regime of spiritual practices, community service or dream interpretation, all of which are intended to open the heart of the aspirant. Often the relationship between spiritual guide or spiritual director requires complete

trust and confidence by the disciple or *murid*. This requires a level of surrender and acceptance to the greater wisdom of the guide. The challenge for the *murid* then becomes how to follow the guidance if it seems too difficult, too strenuous, or even too strange. It may even happen that the *murid* loses the trust and confidence in the Sheikh, which may result in a disruption of spiritual practices. This has been the experience of many aspirants who are attracted by the principles of Sufism but find the practice of it too strenuous. In the case of the Sufis who are American converts to Islam, the practice of gender segregation, ritual prayers in Arabic, and the fast during Ramadan can be extremely challenging for both cultural and other psychological reasons.

Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee became an aspirant at the age of 19 in his native England. In 1991 he became a teacher in the Naqshbandiyya Sufi Order and moved to Northern California, where he founded *The Golden Sufi Center* to help make available the teachings of this Sufi lineage. A Jungian psychologist and Sufi teacher, he leads his own community of American aspirants who are not required to make these culturally complicated changes to their lives including taking Islamic names and the practice of ritual prayers in Arabic. He guides his community in meditation practices and provides dream interpretation. Vaughan-Lee has been a prolific writer on Sufism. In *Sufism: The Transformation of the Heart*, he writes:

Although Sufism developed within Islam, its mystical wayfarers tread a path that can seem contrary to the outer law. For example, Abu Sa'id ibn Abi'l-Khayr, the eleventh-century master of Mayhana, never went on the pilgrimage to Mecca, saying that the real pilgrimage was around the Kaaba of the heart.(1995, p. 13)

His own approach as a Sufi teacher manages to bypass the cultural constraints of Islamic practice to focus solely on the opening and the transformation of the heart.

### ***Qalb: The Immaculate Heart***

In *Heart, Self and Soul*, Frager, himself a Sufi Sheikh of the Halveti-Jerrahi order, outlines the process of opening the *qalb*, the Arabic term for heart. *Qalb* is the immaculate heart or the spiritual heart. Frager locates the spiritual heart between the lower self and the soul. The spiritual heart regulates the psyche and

nourishes the soul by radiating wisdom and light, and it also purifies the gross traits of the personality. The heart has one face turned toward the realm of spirituality and one face turned toward the realm of the lower self and our negative traits. (1999, p. 23)

Using the map of the heart proposed by the sage al-Tirmidhi (824 - 892 CE), Frager outlines the four stations of the heart as the breast (*sadr*), the heart (*fu'ad*), the inner heart (*qalb*), and the innermost heart (*lubb*). Each dimension or station of the heart has its own knowledge and light and corresponds to the different levels of the *nafs*. The breast of the seeker has the knowledge of right action and struggles with the tyrannical *nafs* through the light of practice. Frager identifies the work of Sufism as the inner work of the cleansing of the breast and the opening of the heart through prayer and spiritual practices such as the remembrance of God, *dhikr*. The heart of the believer has inner knowledge, which holds the tension with the regretful *nafs* through the light of faith. The work of Sufism at this level is to remove the veils that obscure or dim the light of our innate wisdom and goodness, which as I have argued in the chapter on the psychology of self is the essential self, the *fitra*. As these veils are gradually removed or the layers of delusion about ontological reality are peeled away, the believer is blessed with the “inner knowledge of spiritual virtues, such as noble character, generosity, patience, and striving against negative tendencies” (pp. 31 - 32).

Frager explains that the heart is the home of *taqwa*, which has often been translated elsewhere as the fear of God or at the lowest level, the fear of God's Wrath or punishment. But for the Sufis, *taqwa* means the fear of being veiled from our love for and intimacy with God. Those who

are awed by God in this way follow the divine commandments with joy, not out of fear of chastisement. Others see *taqwa* as a way to guard against doubt, idolatry, infidelity, insincerity, and incongruent behaviors. Yet others have translated *taqwa* as God-consciousness or the seat of conscience, which also has the sense that God sees us even when our narcissistic wounding makes us think that God is not attending to our needs.

The inner heart of the gnostic has inner vision and is embraced by the inspired *nafs* through the light of gnosis. At this level of our psycho-spiritual evolution, we are fully aware of God's presence. In this station of the heart, moral action evolves into ethical action where we no longer follow the sacred laws because they are prescribed but because we are inspired to conduct ourselves with the principle of *maslaha* or for the highest good of all concerned. The innermost heart of one who has tasted the unitive experience has divine grace and rests in the serene *nafs* through the light of *tawhid*, unity. The description and knowledge of the state of unity with the Divine and the highest state of human experience is what Frager deems one of the crowning achievements of Sufi psychology. He cites the words of the Egyptian Sufi alchemist, Dhu-l-Nun (796 - 858 CE), to convey the depth of this unitive experience from his other work with co-author James Fadiman, *Essential Sufism*:

The Sufi becomes more humble every hour, for every hour is drawing him nearer to God. The Sufis see without knowledge, without sight, without information received, and without observation, without description, without veiling and without veil. They are not themselves, but insofar as they exist at all, they exist in God. Their movements are caused by God, and their words are the words of God uttered by their tongues, and their sight is the sight of God, which has entered into their eyes. So God Most High has said, "When I love a servant, I, the Lord, am his ear so that he hears by Me, I am his eye so that he sees by Me, and I am his tongue so that he speaks by Me, and I am his hand so that he takes by Me." (1998, p. 232)

Hence, the purpose of the transpersonal psychology of Islam is to inspire us to draw ever nearer to this unitive experience by holding the tension between the temptations of the lower *nafs* and the constants prompts of the *qalb*, which Nicholson says in *The Mystics of Islam* “is capable of knowing the essence of all things, and when illumined by faith and knowledge reflects the whole content of the divine mind” (1989, p. 68). This tension between the *nafs* and the *qalb* is what gives true meaning to the Prophet’s use of the term *jihad al-akbar* for the struggle of domination between these two aspects of human nature, especially at the lower level of the *nafs*. The outcome of this struggle is followed by the alchemical transmutation of the *nafs* to their higher levels and of the *qalb* to their deepest levels.

Sheikh Sidi Muhammad al-Jamal ar-Rifai identifies seven stations of the heart in *Music of the Soul* as (1) the return to God (*At-Tawba*), which is the cleansing or the purification of the heart; (2) the surrender to God (*At-Taslim*), which means filling the heart with the love of God; (3) the politeness (*Al-Adab*), which is the recognition of the voice of God in all of us; (4) the fear of God (*Al-Khawf*), which is the demeanor with which we sit near with God; (5) righteousness (*As-Sidq*), which is the journey from surrender to faith to virtue; (6) the Truth (*Al-Haqiqah*), which is the garden of ontological reality; and (7) the Love (*Al-Mahabba*) of God by giving love to all. This is the garden of love.

This is what Sidi means when he encourages us to be *al-Fatiha*, the opening of the heart by living with compassion and mercy towards all beings and all creation. It is in the polishing of the heart that we arrive at the place of *ruh*, the human soul which is located in the *qalb*, the spiritual heart.

### ***Ruh: The Soul***

The Halveti-Jerrahi Sufi understanding of the soul is that it too has different stations or chambers. The personal soul, or the *ruh nafsani*, is located in the circuitry of the neocortex and the amygdala, which is the emotional center of the brain. This function has been referred to as ‘*aql*, in the Garden of Paradise, fed by the River of Water. ‘*Aql* is the location of the positive and negative ego. ‘*Aql* is the center of consciousness which integrates the sub-personalities, brings our complexes to awareness, and responds to intellectual stimulation for personal growth and development. The positive ego serves as our executive function which also provides our sense of self, personal responsibility, self-esteem and integrity. The negative ego generates the opposite tendency for self-inflation, narcissism, delusions of grandeur, alienation, cynicism and a sense of disconnection from others and the One.

The human soul or the *ruh insani*, on the other hand, is located in the *qalb*. It is the spiritual heart and the seat of the *fitra*, our primordial essential and transcendent self with which we come into being. Hence it is the source of our compassion, innate wisdom and creativity, our Buddha nature. The secret soul, or the *ruh sirr* is the inner chamber of the spiritual heart which pre-existed our incarnation. Beyond the secret soul is the *sirr-al-asrar* which Frager identifies in *Heart, Self, and Soul* as “absolutely transcendent, beyond time and space” (1999, p. 109).

Sheikh Sidi of the Shadhiliyya order identifies seven stations of the soul in *Music of the Soul* as (1) the silent remembrance (*at-Tafakkur*), which requires us to live in the heart; (2) the sincerity of love (*al-Hubb*), which is the station of constant prayer; (3) the freedom (*al-Itlaq*), is the station of awakening; (4) the servant of God (*al-Ubudiyya*), “who knows the way of the love, listen to what he says, because he is the wine” (1997, p. 90); (5) the deep knowing (*al-Ma’rifa*), or the station where “you are the light, and not just part of the light, but you are all the light” (p. 91); (6) the presence of the freedom (*Hadhrat al-Itlaq*), which is the station where on Allah

exists and (7) annihilation in God (*al-Fana*), or the station where “you are intoxicated by the wine, but this is the intoxication of love” (p. 96).

In *Stations of The Sufi Path: The One Hundred Fields (Sad Maydan)*, an English translation by clinical psychologist Nahid Angha of an ancient Persian Sufi text by Abdullah Ansari (1006 – 1056 CE), the imaginal figure Khidr is cited, as saying: “There are one thousand stations (*maqam*) between the servant of God and his Lord (*mawla*)” (Ansari & Anghai, 2010, p. 73). Within the context of the wide range of stages and states of consciousness described in the exceedingly well-developed transpersonal psychology of Islam, it is hoped that this researcher’s limitations in transpersonal consciousness and evolution of *qalb* will be accommodated, as we begin a hermeneutic of *al-Fatiha* in the Garden of Paradise, fed by the River of Wine. The alchemical dialogue in Appendix G was helpful in reminding the researcher that I am not alone in this endeavor, and I have never been alone in the soul of this work.

### **Q 1:1 bismillâh ir-rahmân ir-rahîm**

#### ***In the Name of Allah, the Infinitely Compassionate, the Infinitely Merciful***

We invoke the name of Allah to guide us to a level of comprehension and articulation that may serve the highest good of all concerned, since the context of this hermeneutic project is transpersonal in nature. This principle of *maslaha* was discussed in chapter 7, the Garden of Paradise, fed by the River of Milk. The most we can aspire to achieve in this hermeneutic is a general understanding of the transpersonal dimension of these seven sacred verses which may serve to benefit those who are beginning their spiritual path as well as the practitioners in the field of depth and transpersonal psychology. The focus of this verse is Allah and the Infinitude of Compassion and Mercy we can receive in mentioning the very name of Allah. In *Spiritual Gems: The Mystical Qur’an Commentary Ascribed to Imam Ja’far Al-Sadiq*, translated by Farhana

Mayer, the Imam explains: “The name Allah is the unique, incomparable name. It is not ascribed to anything; rather all things are ascribed to it. The meaning (of the word Allah) is the Worshipped One who is the God of creation; His quiddity far transcends being attained to [by any understanding] and His nature (far transcends) comprehension; He is the one hidden from sight and imagination, the Self-veiled - by His majesty - from perception” (Ja‘far, Mayer, Nwyia, & Sulamī, 2011, p. 5).

At the same time, we must remember that the name itself is but merely a symbol of the ontological reality of existence. The symbol represents the Unity of Ultimate Reality and Infinity in a way that human language is incapable of expressing. The Qur’an in Muhammad Asad’s rendition of Q 57:3 articulates the infinitude of this Ultimate Reality as “He is the First and the Last, and the Outward as well as the Inward, and He has full knowledge of everything” (Asad, & Moustafa, 2003, p. 950). This is a clear declaration of both the Transcendence and Immanence of Allah that requires both an exoteric and esoteric receptivity to the One. Q 2:115 in *The Message of the Qur’an* even gives the Unity a face, a countenance: “And God’s is the east and the west: and wherever you turn, there is God’s countenance. Behold, God is infinite, all-knowing” (p. 33). From a transpersonal perspective, Allah is irresistible. We cannot really deny that which is in us and around us, unless our faculties of perception are veiled by unconsciousness.

Carl Jung, according to depth psychiatrist Lionel Corbett in *The Sacred Cauldron*, responded to this reality in psychological terms. Corbett discusses the observation that Maslow made that self-actualization is hindered and peak experiences often get lost in the ritual practices and orthodoxy of institutional religion: “Jung’s contribution to this debate is to postulate the existence in the psyche of an a priori element of the divine, an original object that is not an introject and not the result of developmental factors” (2011, p. 144). If we are to rely on the



Divine assurance of this fact in Q 30:30, then Jung is merely postulating the existence of our primordial essence, the *fitra* or our Buddha nature.

It is wondrous that the Prophet, Ibn ‘Arabi, Rumi, al-Hallaj and others were able to find any number of comprehensible and appropriate words in prose and poetry that give us some sense of their own experience in the presence of the Divine Unity. What they have all shared is the deep experience of overflowing Love and Compassion in the experience of Unity or Oneness. We are being called to that unitive experience by its very utterance, and we are being invited in every recitation of this verse to taste that overflowing Love and Compassion.

#### **Q 1:2 al-hamdulillâhi rabb il-âlamîn**

*All praise is due to Allah, the Sustainer of all the worlds*

It is clear from our brief exploration in the field of transpersonal psychology that we inhabit many imaginal realms both within the terrestrial sphere and beyond. We give thanks for these profoundly rich possibilities of existence within human experience. We are asked in the Sura of Light in *The Message of the Qur’an* in Q 24:41 to cultivate our faculties of perception so that we can express a profound gratitude and appreciation for the mysteries and miracles of life, in the signs of God at every turn:

Art thou not aware that it is God whose limitless glory all [creatures] that are in the heavens and on earth extol, even the birds as they spread their wings? Each [of them] knows indeed how to pray unto Him and to glorify Him; and God has full knowledge of all that they do” (Asad & Moustafa, 2003, p. 605).

We are being asked to understand that prayer and glorification are natural to of all creatures in all the imaginal realms, on earth and in the heavens.

It gives meaning to our lives just to know that although we leave the dust of our existence behind in this world, we always take comfort in the knowledge that these imaginal realms point us to things

beyond our humble physical and material existence. We are given confirmation that just as this world and all its existents are sustained by Allah, all worlds beyond this world are connected in a unity which receives continuous Divine Sustenance. We know that even in the midst of our own lapses into disconnection and loneliness that we can never really be alone. We are, in a word, spoken for. Every atom and molecule of existence is spoken for. The universe is not random. Cosmologist Brian Swimme captures the essence of this in *The Universe is a Green Dragon: A Cosmic Creation Story*: “Our primary teacher is the universe. The universe evokes our being, supplies us with creative energy, insists on a reverent attitude toward everything, and liberates us from our puny self-definition” (2001, p. 167).

We are called to live in gratitude for the bounteous gift not just of the living and of all life, but also for the signs of the self-revelation of Allah, which enfold us and which may yet be beyond the horizon. We know that gratitude deepens our connection to our everyday lives, the Creation, and the Divine. Our gratitude generates a powerful force field of love and warmth as we engage with our loved ones, extended families, co-workers, fellow citizens and other species. Gratitude can sometimes preclude solitude because we become more interdependent.

### **Q 1:3 ar-rahmân ir-rahîm**

#### ***The Infinitely Compassionate, the Infinitely Merciful***

We are reminded again and again of this overflowing Divine love and compassion and indeed again in Q 33:43: “He it is who bestows His blessings upon you, with His angels [echoing Him], so that He might take you out of the depths of darkness into the light. And, indeed, a dispenser of Grace is he unto the believers” (2003, p. 726). Since these sacred words are repeated in the third verse, we are asked to pay close attention to how, through our own embrace of Divine compassion, love, and

mercy, we can bring these qualities back into the world, into our relationships, families, workplace, communities, and countries. It is important to note that the quality of *rahma* is the Yin of the Universe, the Divine feminine, of which we will have more to say in the next chapter. We are being called to love unconditionally because we recognize the *fitra*, the primordial essence in all things. This was perhaps Mansur al-Hallaj's mission in practicing an engaged form of Sufism (please see Appendix G), which meant standing in solidarity with the salt miners and others who were suffering. It also meant taking the sacred words of revelation into the world through interactions with other seekers. He did this in India and in China. He met with people at all levels of society. Often his associates wondered if he was one of them. He evidently had transcended his need to belong to any one Sufi order or faction or class of society. He was clearly in a process of dis-identification from his subpersonalities, especially those which were attached to any specific groups or identities.

#### **Q 1:4 mâliki yawm id-dîn**

##### ***The Sovereign of the Day of Resurrection***

The Sufi goal of self-transcendence invites the novice and true seeker to annihilate or efface ourselves in Allah, *fana fi Allah*. "Die before you die" is the Sufi mantra. Vaughan-Lee makes the connection between Eros and Thanatos in *Love is a Fire: The Sufi's Mystical Journey Home*: "The soul's love for God frees us from ourself, and yet this freedom can seem like death as we die to the person who we think we are" (2000, p. 103). From a transpersonal perspective, life is a continuous process of dying but each death can also be a resurrection into new life, even beyond the grave. As we begin to move through our complexes, subpersonalities and lower *nafs* into the states of consciousness representing the higher *nafs* and deeper levels of the immaculate heart, *qalb*, we lose parts of our old selves. Often we no longer remember the old self nor understand and recognize the

new self. We are dying and being reborn through each transitional stage and between states of consciousness. Our resurrection is hence a continuous process of births and deaths.

It is believed that al-Hallaj had achieved such a high level of consciousness that he was able to laugh and dance when he was brought to the gallows, to be quartered, crucified and burned for his declaration, *ana 'l-Haqq* or “I am the Truth!” Vaughan-Lee captures the spirit of the *maslaha* of al-Hallaj’s heresy: “Through al-Hallaj the mysteries of love became known in the marketplace and the mosque. Love’s martyr, he was prepared to pay the ultimate price, but he also knew that the physical world is only a veil of separation” (2000, pp. 8-9). In Louis Massignon’s multivolume biography, *The Passion of al-Hallaj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, it is clear that al-Hallaj violated all the Sufi norms by his declaration:

Thus the Sufis abandoned him. They had followed him in great number. Although he had rejected the white robe (*suf*), Hallaj was still, to them, one of their own; and in fact he did not abandon their technical language, but spoke it even in public. The leaders of Sufism had officially denounced him, but stayed in contact with him. Shibli, Ibn Fatik, Abu Husayn Wasiti will still be present at his execution, as much out of sympathy as curiosity. The rupture occurred when Hallaj’s declaration of public miracles seemed to them to prove that he had reached, while still alive, this ideal line that Sufism wanted to be only the asymptote or the affirmation of the pure divine essence; and that his personality had not been destroyed as the mystic theology of Junayd was convinced it would be, by the arrival of this miracle from the divine power, but, quite to the contrary, it had been raised up, consecrated and sanctified. (Massignon & Mason, 1982, p. 292)

There was consternation that al-Hallaj’s ecstatic states should have somehow reduced tensions for him politically and within the Sufi brotherhood. But it appears that al-Hallaj had already had a vision of his death. He was unafraid of its approach or the severity of its sting. He was beyond fear and pain. His resurrection was beyond the physical plane.

This understanding of freedom from death has profound implications for the seeker who may be psychologically and spiritually unprepared for its sting, especially if it causes pain, damage, or injury or death to others. I have in mind those who are prepared to martyr themselves for misguided socio-

political reasons. On the other hand, there are those who have given their lives with pure intention, *niyya*, for the freedom of their own people, as we have seen in the Arab awakening in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Libya, Yemen, and Syria.

**Q 1:5 iyyâka na`budu wa iyyâka nasta`în**

***Thee alone we worship and from Thee alone we seek for help***

We can only imagine the states of Unitive Consciousness attained by those who have given themselves over to complete worship of the One by the elevated souls, Sufis and saints of all faith traditions or by observing our teachers in their everyday actions and engagement with life. At the transpersonal level, there is no question of the relevance of Shahrastani's interpretation about the co-creative implications of this verse. We recall from the literature review that he proposed that the worship of the One and the search for Divine assistance is the only real action left to human agency. This implies a total surrender to the outcome of one's worship and prayerful request for Grace. It requires an unconditional love of God with no attachment to the outcome of that expression of love. It is love for God in and of itself as true worship and a complete surrender of the self, so that Allah dwells within us. The act of prostration in Islam embodies this complete surrender of the self. The physical prostration itself raises the heart, *qalb*, above the head, or the human soul above the personal soul.

But there is yet another aspect of worship that is evoked in the Qur'anic verses of Q 24:41 cited above which reminds us that, in the very act of flying, the birds worship and glorify the Divine. This

is also the call to self-actualization for human beings. We are being invited to attain the peak of actualization in all our beingness. Our worship must encompass fulfilling our highest potential and deepest aspirations. This is co-creation through individuation, as each soul must fulfill its own Divine destiny. Worship of Allah is invited in the fullness of our humanity, our self-perfection. It is for this project of alchemical transmutation of our innate gifts that we seek Divine assistance. Yes, this may mean the perfection of our artistic talents, our gifts as musicians, our ingenuity as scientists but it also means our loving, caring attention as the parents of our children, our responsiveness to the needs of our elders and neighbors, the poor and the infirm. We cannot claim to worship without engaging ourselves fully in the world, even if it is the next world we are seeking as our ultimate destination. We truly worship Allah when we bring kindness, joy, love, and happiness into the world for in these actions we begin to manifest Allah through our gifts and talents. We must own our spiritual wizardry of co-creation at all levels of our existence. This is the work of imagination of both mind, *khayal* and heart, *himma*. This is also the work of actualizing our *khalifa*. We take the meaning of *khalifa* from stewardship and personal responsibility and create a space within ourselves for the indwelling of *khalifa*, and self-mastery.

We don't have to look very far in the final revelation to learn how to worship the One. In *The Message of the Qur'an*, Asad translates Q 2:152 as "so remember Me, and I shall remember you; and be grateful unto Me, and deny Me not" (2003, p. 41). The Sufi spiritual practice of remembrance of the Divine, *Dhikr*, is essential to worship and maintenance of empathic resonance with the One or our Beloved. In *Principles of Sufism*, Nahid Angha identifies the three stages of *dhikr* as the remembrance of the tongue or the verbal remembrance, remembrance of the heart and remembrance of the hidden. The *dhikr* of the tongue is a constant repetition of one of the names of God. The *dhikr* of the heart is achieved through a state of constant prayer. The *dhikr* of the hidden governs and

nourishes the energies of the body so that the seeker can become a manifestation of the Divine. At this stage of *dhikr*, the essential self is realized in the Immaculate Heart which overflows with blessings. Angha's articulation of the relationship between the human and Divine in the act of remembrance is compelling:

Life is the interaction between the hidden and apparent influences, and the human being is constantly receiving and distributing those energies. Since the rules and laws of harmony and cooperation are among the most effective laws governing the world, the human being receives only those waves for which he has attuned his being to receive. Remembering Divinity attunes the human being with Divinity and allows him to receive what may be called spirituality. These favorable influences are the underlying conditions which help one receive Divine revelation and inspiration. (1991, p. 84)

So, it appears that during his Ascension, the initial mandate for 50 prayers as requested of the Prophet at the Throne of Allah for the Muslims, was in fact the minimal requirement for true worship of the Divine. The five ritual congregational prayers are hence merely the prayers of initiation into the state of Islam, the state of surrender. But the state of worship asks Muslims to be in a state of constant remembrance, *dhikr*, which for 'Ali, the first Imam of the Shi'a, was considered a polish for the heart. In *Justice and Remembrance: Introducing the Spirituality of Imam Ali*, Reza Shah-Kazemi explains that "once the heart is illumined, all of the other faculties share in the luminosity generated by the invocation, so again, there is further light upon light" (2006, p. 143). To be in a state of constant worship requires, therefore, that all of our thoughts and actions are driven by the recollection of the Divine so that all of our faculties are inspired by the One.

The second part of this verse specifically refers to a prayer request for Divine help. This help which we seek from the Divine is really a prayer for Grace. In *Al-Ghazzali: His Psychology of the Greater Struggle*, Laleh Bakhtiar cites al-Ghazali's definition for "Divine Grace as 'the harmony, agreement, or concord of our will and action with God's Will'" (Bakhtiar & Ghazzali, 2002, p. 31). For al-Ghazali, Grace appears as guidance, sound judgment, confirmation, and support. Using the

concepts of a psychology of self proposed in chapter 6, in the Garden of Paradise fed by the River of Water, the experience of Divine Grace would be the equivalent of aligning both our *niyya* (intention) and *iradah* (personal will) with the Divine Will. Hence, individuation within the context of a transpersonal psychology of Islam is not just becoming fully the person who we are but becoming the person intended for us by the Transpersonal Will.

### **Q 1:6 ihdinâ s-sirât al-mustaqîm**

*Please guide us to the Straight Path*

*[of self-cultivation to the Gardens of Paradise]*

From Ibn ‘Arabi’s encounters with Yahya and Aaron in the Fifth Heaven and with Moses in the Sixth Heaven, we learn that in fact every soul has its own unique individual path. This is especially true for those on the Path of Gnosis but it is also true for all those of us who are covered in the veils of unconsciousness. The Straight Path is the path of each soul on its spiritual journey of the return home. It is the path of light upon light. Hence the straightness of the path is not just in following a prescribed set of rules and laws but in aligning one’s self in integrity with one’s own unique path, it is in effect a path of individuation as Jung would call it. Moses said as much to Ibn ‘Arabi in the Sixth Heaven of his nocturnal journey. It is the Straight Path inwards to the *qalb*, the heart and the inner heart to the innermost stations of the soul.

For the most evolved souls like Sri Yukteswar, the path may be one of service beyond the imaginal realms of the terrestrial sphere to the souls in the astral plane. The Gardens of Paradise may not in fact be the ultimate destination for these souls, as they continue to serve as saviors in other imaginal realms or universes. But for most of us, the Gardens of Paradise are still within the realm of ultimate, though still distant, possibility. We recall that Ibn ‘Arabi sighted beyond the Seventh



Heaven, the four rivers of Paradise from the Lotus-Tree which he says are symbols for the gifts of divine knowledge.

Within the context of this prayer for guidance, most aspirants to the gnostic journey seek a teacher or guide, as is the tradition on the Sufi path, so that they can help us avoid the psychological landmines or even cognitive distortions along the way. In *Psychology in Sufism*, psychotherapist and Sufi psychologist Amineh Amelia Pryor is careful to note the origins of the guidance we might seek from our spiritual teachers:

The pure source of healing and the connection to the teacher is from within our hearts. This arduous journey of knowledge, purity, and truth can only be guided by a force as powerful as love. As travelers are guided to a state of increased self-knowledge, this love becomes balanced with wisdom. Our hearts become clear and our energy is focused so that we may also gain the tools to heal others. (2000, p. 29)

But, in *Psychosynthesis: A Psychology of the Spirit*, the late John Firman and co-author and wife, Ann Gila, are also very careful to point out how our relationship to our guides and teachers can be influenced by primal wounding, repression, and splitting, based on the multitude of empathic failures which we have experienced in the past with parents, caregivers, teachers, other mentors, and even lovers, from childhood to the moment we are initiated on the path to retrieval of the *fitra*, the path of alchemical transmutation of the lower *nafs* and spiritual purification of the heart:

In this splitting and repression we truncate our most fundamental experience of ourselves, of others, of the cosmos, and of Divinity. Remember that the empathic connection with the unifying center - a connection that can be broken or distorted by empathic failure - is ultimately a connection to the source of our being, or Self. Thus a break in this connection is experienced as a break in our connection to the Ground of Being, to source, to God, to spirit, to the Universe. (2002, pp. 155-156)

So, we are cautioned to work through our own wounding, our psychological complexes and subpersonalities and recognize when we begin to project our shadow on our teachers and guides. We may, for example, have not worked through our issues of childhood abandonment and hence lack the

trust that we will ever receive the guidance we fervently pray for. This is not to say that certain spiritual guides, clerics, mullahs, and teachers may not themselves have achieved the highest levels of consciousness or may even have lost their own way through self-inflation and narcissism by tripping over a primal wound or unresolved psychological issue. But this too can serve as guidance as to the stressors and obstacles on the path of illumination. We know that Sufi aspirants have taken on different sheikhs to meet their particular needs and spiritual evolution.

### **The Inner Gardener**

In the act of self-cultivation, our Inner Gardener constantly manages the tensions between these complexes, subpersonalities, narcissistic wounding, and self-inflation of the lower *nafs* as we move in to the higher realms of the *nafs* and the deeper core of the *qalb*. The Inner Gardener needs to do the weeding and the watering in order to attain the ethical essential self. This is a path of individuation which requires both intention and personal will (*niyya* and *iradah*), as well as imagination of the mind and courage of the heart, *khayal* and *himma*, to achieve a high level of discernment. This is the stage in our spiritual evolution where we no longer rely on consensual societal rules but by the promptings of the heart to act in the spirit of *maslaha*, for the highest good of all concerned. Also helpful then is to have the final destination in mind. We cannot say what awaits us in the Gardens of Paradise, but we can hold the image of this reality in our minds and hearts. As we have been guided in the Christian scriptures, without a vision, the people will perish.

## **Q 1:7 sirât al-ladhîna an`amta `alayhim**

### ***The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favors, blessings and Grace***

In the literature review, we have reviewed Jung's interpretation of the story of Khidr from chapter 18 of the Qur'an. Khidr's esoteric knowledge, vastly superior to a divine prophet's exoteric wisdom, was also beautifully recounted by Lex Hixon in *The Heart of the Qur'an*. We learn that Khidr was able to see into the future of three human events and intervenes in such a way as to shock Moses' understanding of the moral law. When questioned by Moses, he explains his interventions by explaining what would have befallen the individuals concerned if he had not acted in these unexpected and unlawful ways. Khidr was clearly an example of one who was endowed with special knowledge and blessed with Grace.

In *A History of God: the 4000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, Karen Armstrong recounts the disciple-teacher relationship between Ibn 'Arabi and Khidr, whom some depth psychologists like the late James Hillman might have described as an imaginal or archetypal figure. The relationship between Ibn 'Arabi and Khidr, or my own relationship with the Laughing Buddha, caused Armstrong to conclude that "People, such as the *ulema*, might be unable to understand the Islam of a Sufi like Ibn al-Arabi" (1993, p. 237). It is a fair question for modern scholarship amongst the *ulema* to begin to examine the possibility of Khidr's existence as an eternal manifestation of those upon whom Allah has bestowed blessings, favors and Grace. Why should he not appear suddenly in any garb or mask? Henri Corbin was asking similar questions about the nature of Khidr in his seminal work, *The Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*:

It has seemed to us that the fact of having Khidr for a master invests the disciple, as an individual, with a transcendent, "transhistorical" dimension. This is something more than his incorporation into a brotherhood of Sufis in Seville or Mecca; it is a personal, direct, immediate bond with the Godhead. What remains to be established is the place of Khidr in the order of theophanies: How is he, an unearthly, spiritual guide, related to the recurrent manifestations of that Figure in which, under various

typifications, we can recognize the Holy Spirit, or in other words, what is his relation to the supreme theophany proclaimed in the *hadith* which we shall meditate below: “I contemplated the Lord in the most beautiful of forms.” In seeking to answer this question we are led to ask whether the disciple’s relation to Khidr is similar to the relation he would have had with any visible earthly *shaikh* - a relation implying a numerical juxtaposition of persons, with the difference that in the one case one of these persons is perceptible only in the ‘*alam al-mithal*. In other words, does Khidr in this relationship figure as an archetype, according to the definition established by analytical psychology, or as a distinct and enduring personality? But is the dilemma involved in our question not dissipated once we become aware that the answers to two questions - *Who is Khidr?* and *What does it mean to be a disciple of Khidr?* - illuminate each other existentially. (1969, pp. 54-55)

The idea that a contemporary human being could communicate with a figure like Khidr, or an angel or a “jinn” from another plane of existence, unseen to the naked eye, and heal a serious physical ailment, had never been within my own repertoire of human experience until I heard of the healing work of Sheikh Sidi Muhammad al-Jamal ar-Rifai. For me, it was as if this capacity to “really see” angels, and not just feel them in our midst, was only within the purview of the prophets of old. However, through the personal engagement of this researcher with the Shadhiliyya order, an American surgeon and close personal friend described the following incident with Sheikh Sidi, which occurred with 30 other disciples present, as follows:

I have not written anything but remember the moment quite well. It was in Dr. Jaffe’s living room the summer of 1997. One of Sidi’s recent books describes three realms. The realm of the unseen (al-ghayb), the realm of witnessing (as-shuhud) and the realm of the imagination (al-khayal). In the case of healing with my daughter, Sidi called first upon the angel Jibril, peace be upon him, and then for the master metaphysician of the jinn, Ahmed. They entered from the world of the unseen, but their presence was felt, imagined, and witnessed. If you have some references for *alam al-mithal*, I’d love to read them. Sidi does mention the *al-mithal*, I am not sure where just now, and a lot of my books are packed. Sidi asked the archangel Jibril to find the healing jinn, Ahmed. The medium was a student of Sidi’s who wrote the answers and instructions on a piece of paper. Apparently the jinn entered my daughter’s body to obtain a diagnostic read. He said she had stones in her liver and swelling of the glands in her chest and neck. He prescribed herbal treatments which we carried out faithfully for several weeks and she gradually improved from her very weakened state following a bone marrow transplant for Hodgkin’s disease. ma salaam, Nur. (N. Hrabko, personal communication, 2007)

It would seem that for Sidi, the Angel Gabriel was a real interlocutor who was able to help him locate a particular *jinn* in order to help him with a specific kind of healing. Caveat, depth psychotherapists: One just cannot assume that every individual who is able to communicate with unseen worlds is hallucinating or has “delusions of grandeur.” As Jung notes in his autobiography, *Memories, Dreams, and Reflections*, “there are things in the psyche which I do not produce, but which produce themselves and have their own life” (1961, p. 183).

From a transpersonal perspective, it is important to heed Jung’s ideas about the world of dreams as well as his thoughts about the objective psyche. The favors, blessing, and Grace with which we are bestowed can be both internal and external. They can be favors from the internal dream world such as those with which I undertook this dissertation or they can be as a result of external stimuli and spiritual entities, such as Philemon, Khidr, and the Laughing Buddha, which guide us when we are about to lose our way or become distracted from our final destination.

Vaughan-Lee, the Jungian Sufi teacher of the Naqshbandiyya, writes about the value and importance of dreamwork within a group in *Catching The Thread*: “As dreams are shared and valued, their substance becomes more real, the inner world more tangible. Some dreams must always remain private, for at times they speak secrets of the soul that are not for the ears of others” (Vaughn-Lee, 2003, p. 79). I have witnessed Vaughan-Lee interpreting a dream in an open forum of Sufis as I have witnessed Sheikh Ragip discuss a dream with one of his students in a more private confidential setting. Dreams are also the very stuff of blessings, favors, and Grace. We often receive representations of the Divine in dream symbolism, but we need to cultivate our faculties of perception, as the Prophet Joseph did for his fellow prisoners. In the Sura named after Joseph, Asad provides his rendition in Q 12:37: “[Joseph] answered: ‘Ere there comes unto you the meal which you are [daily] fed, I shall have informed you of the real meaning of your dreams, [so that you might

know what is to come] before it comes unto you: for this is [part] of the knowledge which my Sustainer has imparted to me”” (p. 383).

Not only were the dreams of Joseph’s fellow-prisoners important for him to read, but so were the dreams of the King. Joseph achieves his own freedom from imprisonment by reading the King’s dreams. Psychologically, one might consider the possibility that freedom derives from our capacity to read the symbols and signs of our own dreams. Unfortunately, this is not a gift that is given to all of us, but we can always explore the meaning of dreams with our psychotherapist or psychoanalyst.

But the gifts of blessings, favors, and Grace we receive are not just limited to these special faculties of perception. A complete interpretation of this verse cannot afford to exclude the millions of people who may not have a specifically spiritual or religious calling but who are willing to put their own lives on the line for others and pay the ultimate price. My thoughts, in this moment, are with the firefighters of New York City who responded to the event of 9/11 without giving any thought to their own need for survival. Just what would Maslow say to this? Would he not have agreed that the need for self-transcendence in these moments trumped the need for safety, security, esteem, and even self-actualization? The firefighters ran into the blazing buildings of the twin towers to save the lives of others, even though they must have known that so many would lose their own lives in service to humanity. The vocation of firefighting itself is, for me, the supreme example of an act of *himma*, which takes courage and the imagination of the heart, just to serve as the guardians and custodians of the lives and property of others. These men and women, the firefighters, medics, nurses, rescue workers, and first responders in all vocations can only have been truly blessed with favors and Grace, which perhaps they often do not recognize. It is well for us to express our gratitude for these unsung heroes and heroines, wherever they are.

**Q 1:7 ghayr il-maghdûbi `alayhim wa la d-dâîn**

*Not of those consciously or unconsciously immersed in Sacred Chaos,*

*Nor of those who have lost their way.*

It becomes apparent from Ibn ‘Arabi’s encounters with Yahya and Moses that each of us has our own unique path to follow, even though we may feel lost. Ibn ‘Arabi claims that Divine Anger was nullified with the final Muhammadan revelation as a Mercy to all humankind. But we cannot ignore the human cruelty and societal emotional cut off in the genocide of the Native Americans, the Armenians, the Jews, the Rwandans, the Bosnians, and untold others. And what are we to make of psychopathology and sociopathy? The words so often translated as Divine Wrath still appear in this verse of *al-Fatiha* and we must find a way to make some meaning of the symbols so that they are not offensive to the One in their fallacy and inaccuracy. These words cannot convey the response of an angry God since, because is completely antithetical to the infinitely compassionate and merciful nature of the Divine. We cannot continue to project indefinitely our own anger on Allah. Those of us who are lost or immersed in Sacred Chaos are necessarily veiled from the light of truth just as Moses could not comprehend the ways of Khidr until the meanings and purpose of his actions were revealed to him. It is the veils of unconsciousness which cause the Sacred Chaos of evil and corruption to persist, whether we are consciously aware of this or not. In Q 30:41, *The Message of the Qur’an* attests to the human source of corruption: “[Since they have become oblivious of God,] corruption has appeared on land and in the sea as an outcome of what men’s hands have wrought: and so He will let them taste [the evil of] some of their doings, so that they might return [to the right path]” (Asad & Moustafa, 2003, pp. 699-700). We have seen, in our own generation, the results of the human contribution to ecocide based on the lack of knowledge of the effects of human action on

the ecology. Hence, we can understand that every unconscious action has a reaction and there are natural and cosmic consequences to all ill-conceived actions derived from unconsciousness.

In the view of this wounded researcher, these verses can only be an acknowledgement of the presence of the personal and collective shadow. Light constellates its own shadow. The Qur'an affirms this principle in Q 25: 45 per Asad's rendition: "Art thou not aware of thy Sustainer [through His works]? – how He causes the shadow to lengthen [towards the night] when, had He so willed, He could indeed have made it stand still: but then we have made the sun its guide" (Asad & Moustafa, 2003, p. 620). This relationship between Light and shadow is self-evident in the reality of their existence but the complexity occurs in their dynamic relationship. What is it that possesses the shadow to overcome the Light if it owes its very existence to the Light? Can the shadow ever overcome the Light or are we merely limited by our faculties of perception when we ask such questions?

After all, we are told in Matthew 4:1-11, that Jesus was tempted by the devil in the desert and he was not overcome. His Light did not succumb to the shadow, but from biblical accounts, it would appear that the power of this shadow was sufficient to take him to see all the kingdoms of the world from a high mountain. We clearly do not read these verses literally but psychologically. There had to be an intense shadow constellated to challenge the light of Jesus. Archetypal psychologist Ginette Paris takes a mythological approach to these opposing forces of good and evil in *Wisdom of the Psyche: Depth Psychology After Neuroscience*: "The presence of a psychic monster calls forth a hero to battle or outwit the monster until the community is safe again" (2007, p. 69). So we do know that even for Jesus chaos existed and that since everything is sustained by the One, the shadow cannot subsist outside the One. It is contained by the One and hence it must have its purpose. The chaos must be Sacred Chaos.



On the other hand, Q 30:41 seems to indicate that the purpose of this chaos is to return us to the path of equilibrium to one of affirmation and the glorification of God. But it also behooves us to recognize that there may be evil *jinn*s or archetypal forces that are constellated in the Universe which sustain the Sacred Chaos, all under the sustenance of the One. We must also acknowledge that at any time these forces can induce spiritual regression, just as a psychotic break can be induced by overwhelming stressors. Hence our prayer for guidance must be constant to avoid these spiritual landmines.

In some cases, the symptoms of a psychotic break may even indicate a spiritual emergency, which if appropriately treated, can lead to a return to the path of self-cultivation. Transpersonal psychiatrist Stan Grof and co-author Christina Grof identify various types of spiritual emergencies in *The Stormy Search for the Self: A Guide to Personal Growth Through Transformational Crisis* (1990), including episodes of unitive consciousness constellated by peak experiences, the awakening of the subtle energy of Kundalini, near-death experiences, emergence of past-life memories, a shamanic crisis, awakening of extrasensory perception, communication with spirit guides, experiences of close encounters with UFOs and possession states.

Although these can all potentially be very positive experiences, they can also become the source of a spiritual crisis: “The main reason for such complications is a lack of real understanding about nonordinary states of consciousness in Western culture. As a result, we are unable to recognize the value of such experiences, accept them, and support them. The prevailing attitude in traditional psychiatry and among the general public is that any deviations from the ordinary perception and understanding of reality are pathological” (Grof & Grof, 1990, p. 77).

We have cited the near-death experience of Azmina Suleman in her autobiography *A Passage to Eternity*. She reported that at first she was very careful not to talk too openly about her experience,

especially her memories of past lives from which she experienced a tirade of emotions. She also recounts that, on her return to normal life, she experienced symptoms of depression and alienation despite having made profound contact with a host of spiritual luminaries: “Shielding my pain with a mask of indifference helped to temporarily ward off those pinpricks of pain and despair that tore relentlessly into my soul. Even though I recognized the need for a more permanent solution to this inner turmoil in my heart, I knew it was something that I would essentially have to deal with alone” (2004, pp. 149-150).

Much has been written about the dark night of the soul, experienced by mystics like St. John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila. Former psychiatrist Gerald May, now a Senior Fellow in Contemplative Theology and Psychology at the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation in Maryland, writes about the depressive symptoms of the dark night of the soul in *The Dark Night of the Soul: A Psychiatrist Explores the Connection Between Darkness and Spiritual Growth*: “Since the dark night and depression so often coexist, trying to distinguish one from another is not as helpful as it might first appear. With today’s understanding of the causes and treatment of depression, it makes more sense simply to identify depression where it exists and to treat it appropriately, regardless of whether it is associated with a dark-night experience” (2005, p. 157).

The dark night of the soul as an aspect of the Sacred Chaos points to an experience of the illusion of separation and longing for the unitive experience, especially if one has had the good fortune to be blessed by a taste of it. Vaughan-Lee writes about these veils of separation as the 70 veils of light and darkness in *Love is a Fire*, even as we fervently seek the Divine Light: “We sense His presence, and yet He is hidden. His veils keep us from Him and yet also protect us from the devastating power of His presence, from the blinding fierceness of His light” (2000, p. 182). So, from a transpersonal perspective, there are times when immersion in Sacred Chaos may be painful and may create

disequilibrium, but we may still be on the path of ultimate illumination, even though we might feel that we have lost our way or lose heart that we are unworthy of such Grace. This gives a very different meaning to this last verse of *al-Fatiha*, depending on the level of spiritual evolution, consciousness and guidance already attained, but also depending on the work we have done with healing our primal wounds. The late John Firman and Gila, who were my own teachers in transpersonal psychotherapy, note in *Psychosynthesis: A Psychology of Spirit* that feelings of abandonment or the sense of a withdrawal of love is an experience of primal wounding based on an empathic break which makes us feel disconnected. One response to these kinds of empathic breaks with our guides and teachers is to neglect a painful moment of wounding to maintain the relationship, taking us into our survival personality. This then serves to make our external unifying center a survival unifying center which reinforces our survival personality and causes a plateau in our spiritual evolution which could also lead to spiritual regression: “over time, you might begin to see yourself in this way too, losing your ability to experience this range within yourself; in other words, you become identified with your survival personality” (2002, p. 151). This psychological dynamic calls our attention to the shadow side of conformity to spiritual or religious etiquette, *adab*, at the risk of authentic self-expression. It is difficult if not impossible to tell our spiritual teachers that we feel hurt by such and such a conversation or an intervention that feels like we are no longer seen or heard. Speaking truth to power seems incongruent with the spiritual path when we are in a teacher-disciple relationship. But unless we dare to stand in our truth about our experience and share it openly with our teachers, we stand the risk of losing an authentic relationship and maintaining empathic resonance. Any serial empathic failures between our guides and our selves can also be an experience of sacred chaos, causing separation, alienation, and longing for a deeper empathic resonance. Conformity can cause states of separation and alienation. These states of separation and

longing can, in fact, feel like states of hell for the initiated, and heaven for those who feel the pain of love for their Beloved or beloved. It is clearly important to bear in mind the relativity of consciousness on the path of gnosis.

Rumi's poem about the chickpea is instructive about the pain that may be inherent in our journey in the process of transformation. Coleman Barks translates this dialogue between the chick pea and the cook in *The Essential Rumi*:

CHICKPEA TO COOK

A chickpea leaps almost over the rim of the pot  
where it's being boiled.  
"Why are you doing this to me?"  
The cook knocks him down with the ladle.  
"Don't you try to jump out.  
You think I'm torturing you.  
I'm giving you flavor,  
so you can mix with spices and rices  
and be the lovely vitality of a human being.  
Remember when you drank rain in the garden.  
That was for this." (Rumi & Barks, 1997, pp. 132-133)

We would also do well to remember that in the spiritual journey, there are a thousand stations, and without the spiritual guidance and direction of a teacher or master who has walked in the way, we may easily be lost and confused.

Of particular concern in *Dar al-Islam* is the state of possession by *jinn*s, and these states of possession may be considered either negative or positive, depending on the symptoms associated with them. In *Al-Junun: Mental Illness in the Islamic World*, edited by Ihsan al-Issa, Malaysian psychiatrists Azhar and Varma report that it is common to believe that symptoms of mental illness, which include shortness of breath, numbness, tremors, palpitations, and abdominal discomfort, are believed to be associated with possession:

Another group of patients have these symptoms because they believe their ancestors were possessed by the *Jinn* (spirits) and that now after their ancestors have passed away, the *Jinn* have decided to stay in their bodies, and the symptoms arise because they are weak or refuse

to accept the *Jinn*. These *Jinn* are supposed to have special powers to help the person they possess or to help others (2000, p. 166).

We have noted that the Prophet himself thought he was possessed after encountering Gabriel. It was the consoling and validating voice of his wife Khadija that calmed his fears. He was not above feeling disoriented by the experience of meeting an angel. So, it was necessary for the Prophet to seek re-assurance and guidance from his wife, and her cousin, Waraqah, who was a Christian monk.

The question of evil is far from settled in Islam, as it is as in all major wisdom traditions an invitation to much reflection and contemplation. What is unquestioned in Islam is that oppositional forces in the Universe cannot be outside the Transpersonal Will. Mansur al-Hallaj was known to have written a treatise titled *Ta' Sin al-Azal* in which Iblis, the disobedient *jinn* who refused the command of God to prostrate before Adam, justifies himself as a pure monotheist, affirming God's transcendence. Herbert Mason's biography *Al-Hallaj* presents a brief sense of the monologue:

This Iblis is thus a higher mystic lover who witnesses the inaccessibility of God, but who through his extreme intellectualization of God as Pure Idea is unable to attain the humility necessary to accept the reality of His creativeness. Iblis, in Hallaj's subtle monologue, marks the spiritual boundary of the mystic's hubris and dares to cross it through his defiant need of self-justification in order to attain his full tragic self-perception. (1995, p. 21)

On the other hand, the commentary and analysis by Micahel Sells and Carl Ernst of al-Hallaj's rendition of the primordial myth, in *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Miraj, Poetic and Theological Writings*, suggests that Iblis, in fact, resisted the temptation to violate the reality of his own unitive experience with the Beloved by surrendering to the Divine command to bow before Adam out of fidelity to a radical monotheism:

*In the mode of personal, mystical knowledge (ma'rifa), Iblis was the most intimate companion of the deity, and thus was in a position to know the inner divine will (irada) and to know its difference from the command (amr). This level is implicit in the argumentative stance Iblis takes throughout, disputing with the deity over the status of the divine command, and interpreting the command to bow down to an other-than-God as a "test" of Iblis's loyalty to radical monotheism. (1996, pp. 270-271)*

The authors make the case that from a metaphysical mode, the opposition between Iblis and God could not have happened without His pre-knowing and predetermining Will. In the lyrical mode, the authors suggest that Iblis' pure love towards the Beloved is compromised by his jealousy toward Adam. The authors differentiate the mode of mystical knowledge from the mode of mystical union, and suggest that from the unitive mode, "*Iblis would not be acting out of his own will but his annihilated will would be replaced by the divine will acting through him*" (p. 271). They substantiate this conclusion by showing that from al-Hallaj's rendition of the myth, Iblis makes a mystical argument in regard to Iblis' *dhikr* or remembrance of God: "*His remembrance is my remembrance, my remembrance, his*" (p. 271). The paradox in the myth is that as a fervent lover of the One, Iblis was willing to accept the consequence of exile in his role as leader of the loyal opposition, without compromising his love, knowing that, in fact, this exile was by the Will of God. Hence, evil was born out of Love.

This myth serves the function of explaining the source of the pre-existing oppositional force that existed in the imaginal realms at the very moment of the creation of the first Adam, who in Islam is considered the crown of Creation. It was Iblis' resistance to this new world order that caused him to rebel against the One, earning him the role of the loyal opposition, dedicated to perpetuating his own unconsciousness in the form of pride, self-inflation, and narcissism, by rejecting the Divine Command. The resulting dynamic provides a rationale for the existence of evil, which, as has been explained, could only occur with the permission of the Divine Will. Iblis then represents the forces of unconsciousness and opposition which perpetuate the veils of darkness, the dark shadow of God, or the Sacred Chaos.

If we amplify the Qur'anic myth and the paradox of the radical monotheism of Iblis, it would be well to remember in Q 2:31 that all the angels were asked to prostrate before Adam because the

Creator had endowed him with the unique capacity to name all things, and this is rendered by Asad as follows: “And He imparted unto Adam the names of all things” (2003, p. 15), implying the knowledge of all things. The myth continues with all the angels following the Divine Command, with the exception of Iblis, whose refusal, in verse Q 2:34, later appears to be the source of his demotion and identification as a *jinn*. However, in Q 2:35, Adam and his *zawj*, his mate, are cautioned not to approach the tree [of knowledge], lest they become wrongdoers by violating their Divine Command. The language of Q 2:36 now changes from use of the name Iblis to use of the word Satan. It appears that Satan tempts Adam and his mate to stumble and this causes their fall from Grace and exile from the Garden of Eden. But if Adam knew all the names of things, what was it about the tree of knowledge that caused Adam and his mate (it may become clearer in chapter 10 why the Qur’an does not have a name for Adam’s mate, which is why this researcher is purposefully not using the name Eve at this time) not to know the consequences of engaging the tree of knowledge? The answer, which is profound for the field of depth psychology, is revealed in Asad’s rendition of Q 7: 20:

Thereupon Satan whispered unto the two with a view to making them conscious of their nakedness, of which [hitherto] they had been unaware; and he said: “Your Sustainer has but forbidden you this tree lest you two become [as] angels, or lest you live forever,.” (2003, p. 233)

Hence the Qur’an itself reveals that Adam and his mate were both unconscious of their nakedness, and it was Satan, or Iblis, who brought their innocence to consciousness, and it was also Satan or Iblis who knew something more about the tree than Adam and his mate. The paradox of this part of the myth is that Adam, who supposedly knew the names of all things, could so easily have been deceived by Satan because he in fact did not have the knowledge of the Unconscious which Satan or Iblis carried. One also has to ask the question, why then did the angels prostrate before Adam if they were seeing before them a being with incomplete knowledge of the unconscious?

The explanation that comes to mind, from a depth psychological perspective, is that Adam represented a symbol or *ayat* of the Unconscious to the angels. They were clearly willing to acknowledge in their own prostration, before Adam, the unconscious aspects in themselves, since they were not able to name the things that Adam was able to name, and since they have also been told by the Creator that they know not all there is to know about Allah's creation. Iblis, on the other hand, is unable to accept that he is still an unconscious being, even though he had attained the status of an angel, so he projects his own disowned unconscious onto Adam, resulting in pride, arrogance and opposition to the Divine command, followed by spiritual regression.

What is also intriguing is that the Qur'an itself implies that the tree of knowledge of the Unconscious is too tempting and seductive to ignore. So not only were Adam and his soul-mate interested in the knowledge of the Unconscious (depth psychology) but they were tempted because they sought to achieve a higher state of consciousness of the angels (transpersonal psychology), the very beings who had prostrated themselves before Adam for his knowledge. Clearly Divine revelation provides a rich and powerful myth that the knowledge and contents of the dark shadow in the unconscious realms and the eternal knowledge of the bright shadow in the angelic realms were both necessary for the awakening of Adam and his mate to the authentic reality of their purity, innocence, and naked corporeality.

These unconscious forces of the Shadow are hence manifested in the angelic realm as well as in the negative *jinn* who serve as the evil whisperers to those who seek the Light. These are the whisperers referred to in the very final chapter of the Qur'an, Q 114:1-6, which is rendered by Asad as follows: "Say: I seek refuge with the Sustainer of men, the Sovereign of men, the God of men, from the evil of the whispering, elusive tempter who whispers in the hearts of men – from all [temptation to evil by] invisible forces as well as men" (Asad & Moustafa, 2003, p. 1127).



In *Ghazali on the Principles of Islamic Spirituality*, translated and annotated by Aaron Spevack, al-Ghazali gives an example of the Sacred Chaos which he refers to as Allah's fire in explaining anger: "Know that anger is a flame of fire, lit from Allah's fire, that overtakes hearts. Whoever it overcomes has inclined toward the hereditary disposition of the devil, for indeed he was created from fire (2012, p. 131). This then is the realm of the *jinn* that have a primordial existence and yet continue to bedevil the human condition.

### **Imaginal Realms**

Transpersonal psychology is inherently an essential aspect of the Integral Psychology of Islam in the Garden of Paradise, fed by the River of Wine. However, although Wilber limits this quadrant to the interior life of the individual, an authentic transpersonal psychology in Islam must extend its reach to include the microcosm and the macrocosm of the individual. In other words, there are forces both internal and external that impact the interior life of the individual. In Islam, the interconnectedness with all life precludes a psychology of individualism, without necessarily arresting the path of individuation, as Ibn 'Arabi's nocturnal ascent to the seven heavens confirmed for us. Each of us necessarily has a unique spiritual path to take. The imaginal realms include the world of the Angels, the *jinn* and other unseen archetypal forces. Tom Cheetham's book, dedicated to the understanding of Henry Corbin's thought, writes passionately about these imaginal realms in *The World Turned Inside Out: Henry Corbin and Islamic Mysticism*:

This limitless cosmos is full of Presences, full of Persons - full of Angels. We have to discard all our trivialized and anthropocentric conceptions of the nature of such beings. They are personified metaphysical presences, the movers of worlds, and they provide the connection between ourselves and divinity. There is no question of anthropomorphism. The personality of these beings is not derived from ours; ours is only a dim reflection of theirs. The charge of anthropomorphism has a certain force while the world is "wrong side out." But it is only by turning the world right side out again that we can see this. (2003, p. 85)

The alchemical dialogue with my inner seeker or *salik* and the two imaginal dialogues in Appendix G are testimony to the interconnection and interdependence of both internal and external forces. I had no idea until I had the alchemical dialogue that the vivid childhood memory of a dead chick had been one of the early impulses to my own search for the answers to the mysteries of life and death. I was never sure in the dialogue with al-Buraq what kind of state of reality was inhabited, especially when I had the distinct impression of seeing al-Buraq's eyes. I certainly felt transported in that dialogue with a completely mythic figure. Was this white-winged steed a personified metaphysical presence or is it possible that our imagination invites these presences into being? The dialogue with Mansur al-Hallaj, or as he clarified it for me, my *imago* of al-Hallaj, was instructive in discovering that his engaged form of Sufism was related to the social justice causes that the Prophet had modeled for him. The Prophet was after all a social revolutionary. He turned his world inside out. It certainly helped me to understand more fully the *khalifa* experience of personal and social responsibility that is felt and goes with the gift of blessings, favors, and Grace, as the social conscience of Islam. Al-Hallaj willingly and ecstatically accepted the judgment of the sacred laws of his time. But where is the al-Hallaj of our time, who is willing to challenge these laws, which were really sacralized by humans for an earlier time? Where are the Muslims of today, whose experience of elevated stations have prepared them to take responsibility for guiding the *umma*, which now includes sacred laws for all humanity and the ecosphere, in the age of globalization? Have they abandoned the masses and perpetuated the splitting, because the struggle is impossibly difficult? Can we really continue to play the victim and project the shadow onto others for hijacking the faith, when we have abrogated our responsibilities to Islam and its prophet? Is that what the Prophet would have expected from his fold after modeling the true meaning of *khalifa* for us?

It is evident from a cursory exploration of the kinds of spiritual guidance that are available to us that transpersonal psychology cannot be limited to the terrestrial paradigm. Our universe is rich with signs and symbols that point to multiple realities, or parallel universes, if you will. The recitation of *al-Fatiha*, the opening, must necessarily mean that this opening extends to all the imaginal realms, including the realms inhabited by the angels and *jinn* and figures like al-Buraq, Khidr, and the Laughing Buddha, as well as mystical cities and astral planes. We know of their existence, and some of us have had the blessings, favors, and Grace to experience these realms.

At the same time, we cannot ignore the fact that psychological preparation and spiritual guidance or direction by a teacher who has been initiated in these sciences can, before and after stepping into these realms, be an important measure of self-care. We know that states of depression and dark nights of the soul can follow near-death experiences and other out-of-body-experiences or nonordinary states of consciousness. We know also that states of depression can result from bringing up our repressed anger and other complexes and *nafs* into the light of consciousness. We also know that many of these states of consciousness are not permanent, and they too may have to be grieved.

It would be re-assuring to know that there are adequately trained psychotherapists in depth and transpersonal psychology who can take up the mantle of the Sufi teachers and saints of all traditions to provide us with the necessary healing guidance and assistance. What Mansur al-Hallaj would ask is the purpose of this inner knowledge for the terrestrial world we inhabit most of the time. How can we bring this knowledge from inner and imaginal realms to beautify our world through co-creation with the One? Sells and Ernst suggest that al-Hallaj was a social revolutionary as well as a mystic. Perhaps we are beginning to hear from the ghost of al-Hallaj in the Arab awakening.

Q 55:26-27 reminds us in *The Message of the Qur'an* that everything, all these nonordinary states of consciousness, must perish: "All that lives on earth or in the heavens is bound to pass away: but

forever will abide thy Sustainer's Self, full of majesty and glory" (Asad & Moustafa, 2003, p. 939).

This is a cautionary affirmation that we must always be focused on the Ultimate Reality, despite the many stations of rest and repose on the way. Paramahansa Yogananda adds his voice to this conclusion with his translation of some verses from *Wine of the Mystic: The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam : A Spiritual Interpretation*:

*How long, how long, in Infinite Pursuit  
Of This and That endeavour and dispute?  
Better be merry with the fruitful Grape  
Than sadder after none, or bitter, Fruit.*

(1995, p. 111)

